

"In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west." • Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him)



# God in World Religions

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Accident?  
A response.

**12** Jesus: God or  
Beloved of God?  
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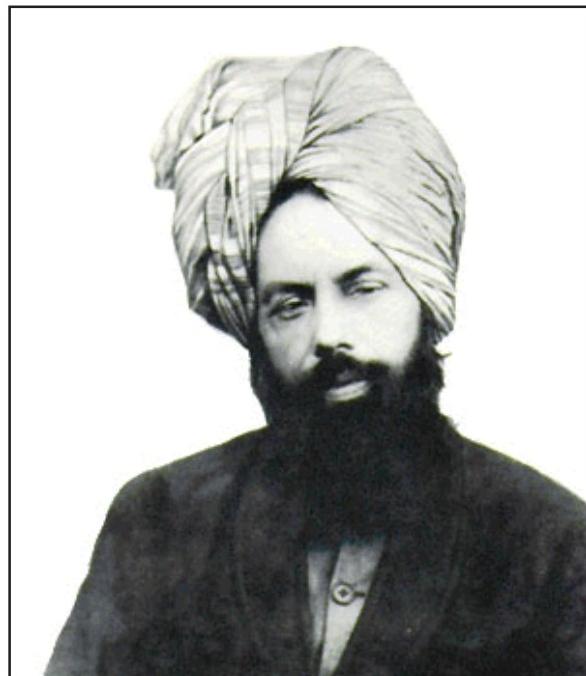
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# The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in over 178 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) in a small and remote village, Qadian, in the Punjab, India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Ahmad proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion.” (2:257) It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V. The USA National Headquarters is located in Silvers Spring, Md. 20905, PH: 301.879.0110 FAX: 301.879.0115.



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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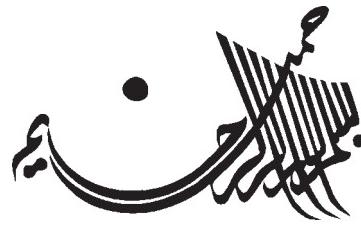
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## *The Holy Qur'an: Chapter 1: Al-Fatiyah*

- [1:1] In the name of Allah, the Gracious, the Merciful
- [1:2] All praise belongs to Allah, Lord of all the worlds,
- [1:3] The Gracious, the Merciful,
- [1:4] Master of the Day of Judgment.
- [1:5] Thee alone do we worship and Thee alone do we implore for help.
- [1:6] Guide us in the right path --
- [1:7] The path of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, those who have not incurred Thy displeasure, and those who have not gone astray.

# Four Principal Attributes of God in Islam

By Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

We proceed to expound what is set out in *Surah Fatihah* [Ch. 1 of the Holy Quran] from *Rabb-ul-Alameen* [Lord of all the worlds] to *Malik-i-Yaum-id-Deen* [Master of the Day of Judgment]. As expounded in the Holy Quran, it comprises four grand verities:

The first verity is that God Almighty is *Rabb-ul-Alameen*, that is to say, that God is the *Rabb* and Master of all that which is in the universe. All that appears, is seen, felt or perceived by reason, is His creation, and that true existence belongs only to God Almighty and to nothing else. In short, the universe with all its components is created and is the creation of God. There is nothing in the components of the universe which is not the creation of God.

Through His perfect *Rububiyyat* [Lordship] God Almighty controls and rules over every particle of the universe.

His *Rububiyyat* is in operation all the time. It is not that after having created the world God has withdrawn from its control and that He has committed it to the law of nature so that He Himself does not intervene in any way. It is not like the maker of a machine who has no concern with it after it has been made. The creations of

exercises His *Rububiyyat* in respect of everything by His will and intent. It is not as if His *Rububiyyat* were exercised in respect of anything without His intent. In short, this verity means that everything in the universe is created and is dependent upon the *Rububiyyat* of God Almighty in respect of all its excellences and conditions, at all times. There is no spiritual or physical excellence which any created thing can acquire on its own without the determination of the Absolute Controller. Besides, it is latent in this and other verities that the divine attributes, such as *Rabb-ul-Alameen* etc., are special to Him and that none else is associated with Him in that respect. The opening phrase of the *Surah*, namely,

*Alhamdu-lillah*, makes it clear that all worthiness of praise belongs to God alone.

The second verity is *Rahman* [Grace], which follows upon *Rabb-ul-Alameen*. We have already explained that all animates, whether gifted with reason or not, good or bad, have been furnished and continue to be furnished with all that is needed for their maintenance, preservation of life, and the continuation of their species out of the general mercy of God Almighty. This is an absolute bounty that does not depend upon anyone's actions.

The third verity is *Raheem* [Mercy], which follows after *Rahman*. This means that, as demanded by His mercy, God Almighty brings

about good results in consequence of the efforts of His creatures. He forgives the sins of those who repent. He bestows upon those who ask. He opens for those who knock.

The fourth verity is *Malik-i-Yaum-id-Deen*. This means that God Almighty is the Master of all perfect recompense which is free from all test and trial and the intervention of beguiling means and is purified of all uncleanness and is free from doubt and defect and is a manifestation of His great powers. He does not lack the power to make manifest His perfect recompense, which is as bright as the day. The manifestation of this grand verity has as its purpose to make the following matters clear to everyone as a certainty.

First, that reward and punishment are a certainty, which are imposed upon His creatures by the True Master as the result of His special determination. This matter is not possible of exposition in this world for it is not clear to the

average person why and wherefore does he experience good or ill, and comfort or pain. No one hears the voice out of whatever he experiences that this is the recompense of his deeds, nor does anyone observe or feel that whatever he is passing through is the consequence of his actions.

Secondly, the exposition is desired that material means are irrelevant and that it is the Grand Being or God Who is the fountain-head of all grace and the Master of all recompense.

Thirdly, it is desired to expound what is great good fortune and what is great misfortune. Great good fortune is that condition of supreme triumph in which light, joy, pleasure, and comfort encompass the inside and outside, the body and soul, of a person, and no limb or faculty is left out. The great misfortune is the torment which, in consequence of disobedience, impurity, distance and separation, is set ablaze in the hearts and envelopes the bodies so that the whole being feels like being on fire and in hell.

These manifestations cannot be observed in this world because this narrow, constricted and opaque world, which puts on the mantle of physical means and is in an imperfect condition, cannot bear their being made manifest. This world is subject to tests and trials and its comfort and its pain are both temporary and defective. Whatever a person experiences in this life is under the veil of physical means which hide the countenance of the Master of recompense. Thus this world cannot be the true and perfect and open day of recompense. The true, perfect and open Day of Judgment or of Recompense will be the world which will follow this one. That world will be the place of the grand manifestation and of the demonstration of glory and beauty. Whatever hardship or ease, comfort or pain, sorrow or joy, is experienced by people in this world is not necessarily attributable to God's bounty or His wrath. For instance, anyone's being rich is not a conclusive proof that God is pleased with him, nor is anyone's poverty or privation proof that God Almighty is displeased with him. Both these are a trial so that a wealthy one may be tried in respect of his wealth and a poor one may be tried in respect of his poverty. These verities are set out in detail in the Holy Quran.

[Brahin-e-Ahmadiyya, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 1, pp. 444-461, footnote 11]

***At no time is the universe deprived of the benefit of His grace. Even after the creation of the universe, that Source of Grace is needed every moment, without interruption, as if He had not yet created anything.***

the True Maker are not unconnected with Him. The *Rabb-ul-Alameen* exercises His perfect *Rububiyyat* all the time over the whole universe and the rain of His *Rububiyyat* falls perpetually upon the whole universe. At no time is the universe deprived of the benefit of His grace. Even after the creation of the universe, that Source of Grace is needed every moment, without interruption, as if He had not yet created anything. As the world depended upon His *Rububiyyat* for its coming into being, it is equally dependent upon it for its continuation and sustenance. It is He Who supports the world every moment and every particle of the universe is kept fresh and flourishing because of Him. He

# Welcome to the Muslim Sunrise

*In its 86<sup>th</sup> year of publication, the Muslim Sunrise carries with it the distinction of being the very first and longest running Muslim periodical in America. Along with a new Editorial Board, the Muslim Sunrise also has a new look.*

The issues will be primarily focused on a single theme – the theme of this issue is God – and present diverse perspectives on the subject. In this full size magazine format, readers will also find fresh new recurring segments, such as ‘News, Views and Reviews’, which addresses coverage of Islam in the media, ‘The Interview’, in which the Muslim Sunrise sits with noteworthy personalities from diverse backgrounds and ‘Trivia’, where readers can try their hand at crosswords and word matches!

One quality that makes America great is its strong emphasis on freedom of expression. The Muslim Sunrise encourages a free flow of ideas and welcomes your correspondence. If you want a clear, concise and definitive answer to a question on Islam, send it to us and look for responses in ‘Questions and Answers’. Share your thoughts on the content of the Muslim Sunrise in ‘Letters to the Editor’. All correspondence should be directed to [muslim\\_sunrise@yahoo.com](mailto:muslim_sunrise@yahoo.com) or the mailing address on the subscription slips. While on the topic, an annual subscription costs just \$14.99, so please support our endeavor by subscribing today.

As the fastest growing, yet the most misunderstood religion in the world today, we hope that The Muslim Sunrise will answer the call for a genuine, educational, yet plain spoken representation of true Islamic teachings.

Lastly, Muslims follow the name of God’s prophets with the prayer ‘Alae hissalaam’ or ‘may peace be upon him’ and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad ‘Sallallaho alaehi wasallam’ or ‘may peace and blessings of God be upon him’. While such salutations have been abbreviated in the text for readability (as & sa respectively), we encourage all Muslims to offer these prayers for the pious prophets of God.

## The Muslim Sunrise Editorial Board



Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq,  
Founder of The Muslim Sunrise



Historic cover of the first issue of  
The Muslim Sunrise, July 1921

# Editorial

*The central focus of all religions in the world is the belief in an entity that is Supreme over all things. Irrespective of the name given to such an entity or deity such as Allah, God, Jehovah etc., the basic attributes of such a deity are very much identical.*

**H**uman beings have, throughout history, believed in God in various forms. One of the reasons for such a belief is a natural instinct, which desires to find its Creator. In simple terms, the quest to find and accept God is factory-built among human beings.

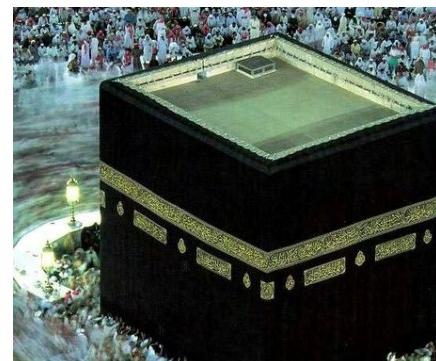
Two questions that often arise in our minds.: Why are there so many religions or Gods and why do we even need to bother with the concept of God? The fact is that there are not many Gods. There is only One God who sent various prophets to different parts of the world for the guidance of humanity. It was due to His Mercy and Benevolence that He always provided such guidance.

As human beings progressed in their physical environment, however, they did not have the means or methods to receive, accept or share the guidance among all the humans in the world. Because of the limitation of distance and geographical divisions, Krishna and Buddha were sent to India, Moses and Jesus were sent to the Israelites and many others were sent to other nations and continents of the world. Some of the nations kept their history better than the others, but the traces of Guides and Prophets can be found in every part of the world.

As humanity progressed and the means of communications and the facilities of physical movement made it possible for mankind to be a worldwide family, it was the perfect time to have one faith and one religion. This is the basic theme of believing in one God: to have a spiritual family of human beings believing in one set of values, morals and a code of life. Without one common God, the perfect unity of humans is impossible. Not only that but the physical closeness of humans in these days dictates that we agree upon One Entity to be united for our further worldly and spiritual progress. In our belief, Islam presents this comprehensive message for the whole of mankind to be united through the Prophet Muhammad,<sup>sa</sup> who declared that he was sent as God's Messenger for the whole of mankind.



***The fact is that there are not many Gods. There is only One God who sent various prophets to different parts of the world for the guidance of humanity.***



One Entity has always existed. The attributes of God in the Bible are the same as those of Allah in the Holy Quran. This covers three major faiths of the world; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. We can also establish that in the Hindu and Confucian faiths, the concept of God started with the same theme. That just about covers the whole globe.

In this issue, we have tried to present the attributes and concept of God in various religions. We hope this will help us gain some common ground in achieving the final stage of our progress—one human race under One God. There would be no need to have different names

for our Creator; just different attributes to comprehend so we could collectively continue in the struggle to shape our lives in likeness of Him. Regardless of the area we were born in, the color of our skin, our gender or the languages we speak, our morality and way of life would be under one God. It is up to us to make a concerted effort with our fullest capacity to realize this objective. We can achieve this goal only through intelligent dialogue, a respectful exchange of ideas and sincerity.

Without one common God, the perfect unity of humans is impossible. The final stage of our progress – One human race, under one God.

# “Is God an Accident?”

## -- A Response

“

*The fact is no amount of philosophical debate can prove God's existence, nor can His existence be proved scientifically using the tools of science at our disposal, weaving God into some mathematical equation or natural law. To scientifically prove God's existence would place God in the realm of his own creation.*

”

By Dr Tahir Ijaz, San Diego, California

The philosophical debate over the existence of God between atheist and theists is centuries old and continues *ad nauseam* in the media, internet discussion forums and books and periodicals. Perfectly intelligent people can have opposite views. The late Dr Abdus Salam, a theoretical physicist and Nobel laureate was a devout Muslim and believer in God, and yet a man who shared the Nobel Prize with him that very same year, Dr. Steven Weinberg, actively publishes books defending and promoting atheism.

The fact is no amount of philosophical debate can prove God's existence, nor can His existence be proved scientifically using the tools of science at our disposal, weaving God into some mathematical equation or natural law. To scientifically prove God's existence would place God in the realm of His own creation. By definition then God could not be the Creator of the laws of science and the mathematical equations which describe them, which is the role ascribed to Him: the ultimate Cause of everything, including natural laws. Based on reflection of nature a strong argument can be made that it is more rational to believe in a Creator than to believe there is none. However as summarized by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup>:

“Observation of the heavens and earth and its orderliness only leads to the conclusion that the universe should have a Creator yet it is not proof that such a Creator in fact exists. There is a difference between ought to be and is” (*Chashma Masihi*, page 19-20).

How then can a person be convinced that God truly exists, and can it have an empirical foundation? We will address that towards the end of the paper, following review of the article. First let us set forth a summary of the arguments in favor of a Creator, a theistic world-view, before proceeding to the article.

In his book, *The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam*, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> presented the following arguments in support of the existence of God. They are in brief: 1) there is order in the universe and design; 2) for all effects there are causes and in the finite universe you cannot have an infinite series of effects and causes; it must terminate in a final Uncaused Cause; 3) there has to be something that is eternal. As the universe was created there has to be a Reality immune from mortality. Something has to be there when no material universe is present; 4) man, in his very nature created by God, seeks the First Cause – God. That characteristic is innate based on the Quranic verse (7:173) where Allah asks the soul, “Am I not your Lord? The soul responds, “Indeed”, showing that man's very nature cannot deny the existence of God.

The last point above about God being wired into the recesses of the human mind is, as we shall see, relevant to the article to be reviewed. On this point, Hadhrat Ahmad<sup>as</sup> goes on to write:

“Those who deny God do so because they can find no proof of His existence according to their own fancy. Yet they acknowledge that for everything that is created there must be a creator...a research scholar who does not acknowledge the existence of God, in effect does so indirectly, for he too, like us, searches for the causes of effects. This is acknowledgment of a sort, though it is not perfect...the verse we have cited also indicates that a denial of the existence of God is only a manifestation of this earthly existence, for the true nature of man fully confesses His existence” (Page 60).

According to Hadhrat Ahmad, one sign of the existence of God is the very fact the search for a Higher Being is hardwired into the human brain and is rooted to the quest for cause and effect. There has to be an ultimate First Cause in this finite world, Hadhrat Ahmad contends, for an infinite series of cause and effect is not possible.

Man searches for higher truth: the atheistic physicists search for what they now call a “Theory of Everything” and doing so acknowledge their belief in the existence of truth—and that very acknowledgement and recognition of a truth, albeit subconscious and within the framework of science, is faith at one level.

A careful perusal of books by atheistic evolutionists such as Dawkins reveals they give natural selection the quality of a conscious mind – that selection ‘does’ this or that in a *non-random* fashion. Moreover even in the parlance of the secular world, people, both atheists and theists alike, personify nature with the term Mother Nature, as if nature is consciousness onto itself. Instead of saying “God is full of wisdom” the phrase ‘Mother Nature is full of wisdom’ is employed, akin to praising the painting *Mona Lisa* for the great achievement and neglecting the artist, Da Vinci. It is nothing more than replacing a formal deity, the Ultimate Causeless Cause, with an informal one, a subconscious recognition of the beauty and wisdom in the higher Truth, which as mentioned, is subconsciously acknowledged.

Atheistic naturalists like Daniel Dennett, author of *Dawin's Dangerous Idea*, state that natural selection replaces a conscious Creator of the universe in their world-view. What they forget is natural selection *requires* the pre-existence of complex, reproducing biological units including the DNA molecule within them, the very thing one is trying to explain. It is fair to say these authors take science way beyond its domains, trying to explain ultimate origins when science cannot explain itself.

You can take your pick then: either lifeless matter or laws of science that describe it (which ultimately became conscious!) is eternal or a Conscious Reality/Being is eternal. Something requires no beginning or no end, and that Something has caused a chain of events to lead to an intelligible universe against all odds, with creation of conscious creatures desiring the knowledge of the ultimate causes. To take the atheistic approach means: nothing became everything, death became life, and unconsciousness became consciousness.

With this background, it is useful now to review the recent article, Is God an Accident? The author, Paul Bloom, a professor of child psychology and linguists at Yale, offers a possible reason for the almost universal belief in God and an afterlife. The information gives further insight to the idea that man’s belief in a creator is truly hardwired into brain. The author attempts to

answer the question: why belief in God? In his own words:

“Despite the vast number of religions, nearly everyone in the world believes in the same things: the existence of a soul, an afterlife, miracles, and the divine creation of the universe.”

In surveying the religious landscape of America, he writes that some 96% of Americans believe in God, and that is no anomaly, looking at the world at large. Man is a worshipping animal, whether it is bowing before a stone or belief in the Unseen. Contrary to popular belief, belief in a personal living God among scientists is no different today than decades ago, comparing polls asking scientists about God and religion in 1916 and comparing them to one in 1996. The facts are an embarrassment for those who see supernatural beliefs as a cultural anachronism, soon to be eroded by the steady march of scientific discovery.

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Those faiths that formally deny a creator-God and body-soul duality, like Buddhism, Bloom writes, actually have adherents who believe in these concepts, despite being formally denied in their scriptures. Millions of Buddhists believe in immaterial realities with special powers, and indeed many treat the Buddha as a Divine figure, asking him for luck and success in personal life.

Specifically in regards to body-soul duality, Bloom mentions a study of children who were told a story of an animal which dies. When asked about physical and biological properties, children readily appreciated the effects of death: no brain, no working eyes or ears. But when asked about psychological properties, the majority of children felt the dead animal still has feelings and thoughts. The soul survives, and children believe in a continuation of life (life after life) even more than adults in all cultures, showing perhaps that such belief is not learned, but rather innate in human nature. Bloom writes that humans are intrinsically dualists. It seems intuitively obvious to us that the physical body and conscious entity – a mind or soul – are genuinely distinct. We don’t feel that we are our

bodies. Rather we feel we occupy our body and own it.

The author, who appears to be agnostic or even atheistic in his world view, concedes that belief in a creator-God is bred in the bone, and the idea of a First Cause (God) is not learned, but rather part of human nature, a by-product of our mental systems. Our ability to believe in a body-soul duality lends itself to a belief in immaterial agents, like God he argues.

Bloom cites more studies in child psychology to support his argument of nature over nurture, as far as belief in God and an afterlife is concerned, which incorporates a contradistinction of physical body and soul. Mentioning another study he writes:

“Nascent creationist views are found in young children. Four year olds insist that everything has a purpose, including lions (“to go into the zoo”) and clouds (“for raining”). When asked to explain

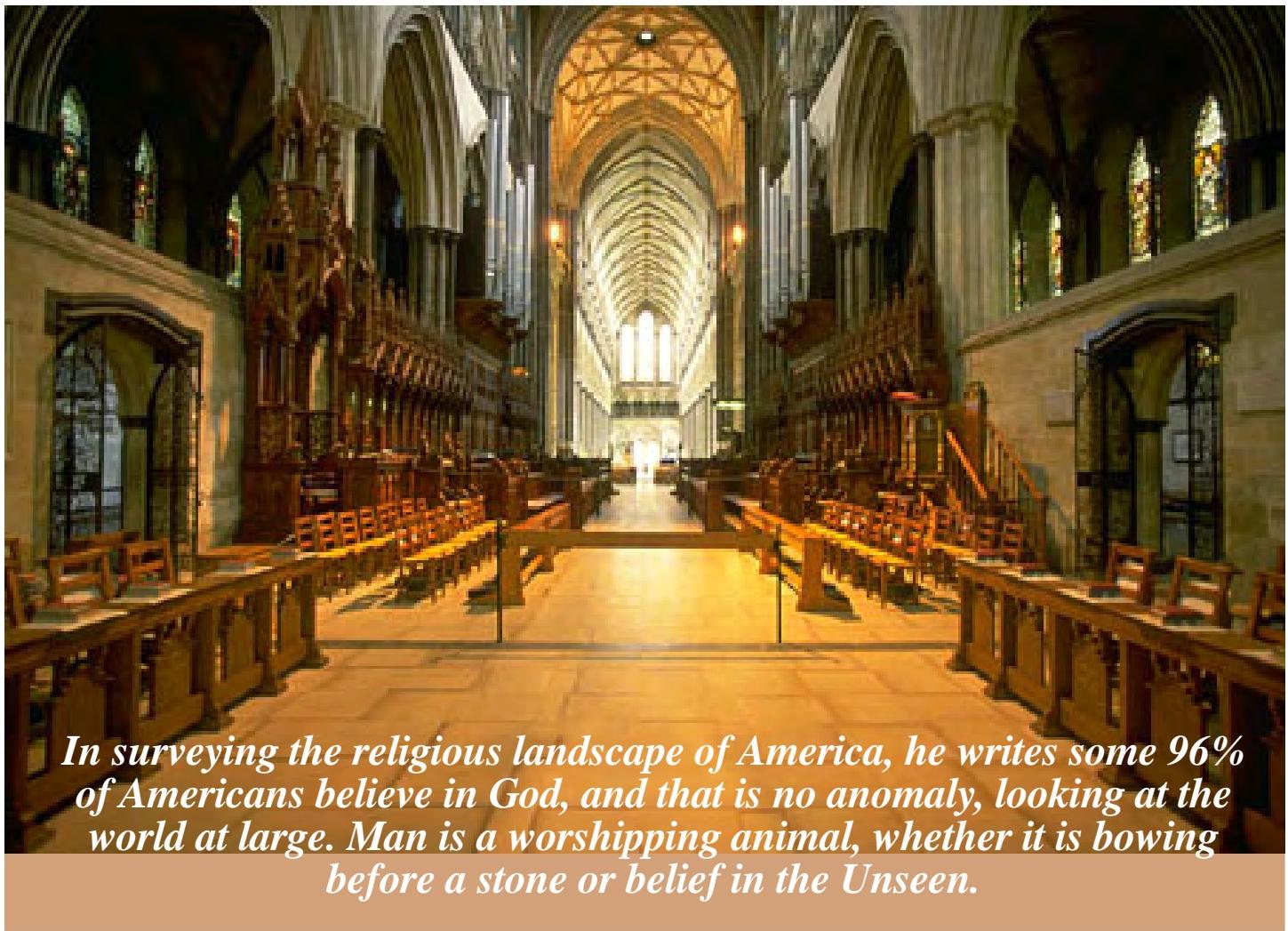
why a bunch of rocks are pointy, adults prefer a physical explanation while children choose a functional one, such as “so that animals could scratch on them when they get itchy”. And when asked about the origin of animals and people, children tend to prefer explanations that involve an intentional creator, even if the adults raising them do not.”

Bloom also reviews views of creation on the part of adults. Quoting material from Dawkins in support of an undirected evolution without God, he concedes that almost no one really believes in a blind undirected evolution. Moreover,

“One poll found that more than one third of college graduates believe that the Garden of Eden was where the first human beings appeared. And among those who claim to endorse Darwinian evolution, many distort it one way or another often seeing it as a mysterious internal force driving species toward perfection.”

If one is tempted to analyze this from the political perspective of the “red state versus blue state” issue, think again, says Bloom, for while it is true more Bush voters are creationists, over half of Kerry’s voters believe God created human beings in their present form, with most of the rest believing evolution was directed by an Almighty Being. Bloom concludes his take on the creationism-evolution debate:

“The theory of natural selection is an empirically supported account of our existence. But almost nobody believes it. We may intellectually grasp it, but it will never feel right. Our gut feeling is that design requires a designer.”



*In surveying the religious landscape of America, he writes some 96% of Americans believe in God, and that is no anomaly, looking at the world at large. Man is a worshipping animal, whether it is bowing before a stone or belief in the Unseen.*

However, as can be argued from what Bloom himself has presented, what people have trouble believing is not so much evolution *per se*, but the concept of a blind undirected evolution, without a First Cause (God) to initiate and guide the chain of events from simple to complex.

Bloom considers the innate tendency of humans to believe in a Deity as a form of ‘mental conditioning’ or ‘accidental by-products’ of our mental systems. Humans somehow are supposed to be hypersensitive to signs of agency, that we see purpose and design in anything. Why humans have developed this state through evolution is for him to explain, but he is definitely on the mark when he says the universal theme of religion, i.e. belief in a creator-God, is part of human nature and not learned. He concludes:

“Nobody is born with the idea that humanity started in the Garden of Eden, or that martyrs will be rewarded in Heaven; these ideas are learned. But the universal themes of religion are not learned. They are part of human nature.”

In complete contradistinction to some modern psychologists who see belief in a God as a weakness or psychological misunderstanding of

reality around them, it was the belief of Hadhrat Ahmad that this very instinct of man to believe in a creator was yet another sign that a creator actually exists. So belief in God is not an accident!

How then is certainty in belief in God ultimately acquired then, if the universe only points to God and does not prove Him? This is a vast topic, but Hadhrat Ahmad addresses the question briefly in these quotes:

“The first duty of a person therefore, is to acquire certainty with regard to the existence of God, and adopt a religion through which this certainty can be acquired...How can such certainty be acquired? It cannot be acquired through mere stories. It cannot be acquired through mere arguments. The only way of acquiring certainty is to experience God repeatedly through converse with Him or through witnessing his extraordinary signs, or by keeping company with someone who has that experience (Naseem-e-Dawat page 81-2).”

“As the operation of reason is defective, incomplete and doubtful, a philosopher cannot recognize God purely through reason...There are millions of people in the world who regard

themselves as very wise philosophers and who utterly deny the existence of God. It is obvious that if they had discovered a strong reason for the existence of God, they would have not have denied it. If they had discovered a conclusive argument in support of the existence of God, they would not have rejected it...Be sure, therefore that belief in the unity of God can be achieved only through a prophet, as our Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> convinced the atheists and pagans of Arabia of the existence of God by showing them thousands of heavenly signs. Up till today the true and perfect followers of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup>, present those signs to the atheists (Haqiqatul Wahyi, page 117-8).”

Through piety and dedication, a seeker can be convinced of God’s existence when He reveals Himself in diverse ways: acceptance of prayer, true dreams, visions, and signs presented to the world by those claiming to be from God. Only then can a seeker of truth be satisfied on a personal level.◆

Paul Bloom's "Is God an Accident?" was printed in the December issue of the Atlantic Monthly."

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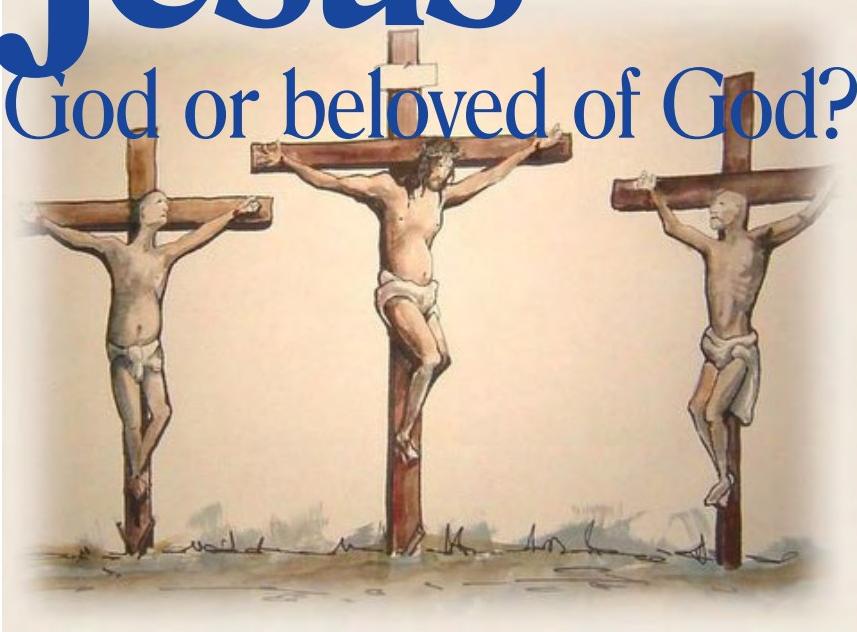
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# Jesus God or beloved of God?



A lecture delivered by (late) J. D. Shams, Imam of the London Mosque in 1940 as part of a series of lectures on "why the early christians accepted islam".

**A**most extraordinary and unparalleled change occurred in the 7<sup>th</sup> century of the Christian era. Arabia was an arid and isolated peninsula unaffected by events in the rest of the world. Its population consisted of barbarous tribes mostly nomads, who loved the freedom of the deserts, the starlit sky above, the sandy floor below; despised by others, and dead morally and spiritually. But as Thomas Carlyle says:

*"To the Arab nation Islam was a birth from darkness into the light."*

"Arabia first became alive by means of it. A poor shepherd people roaming unnoticed in its deserts since the creation of the world; a Prophet was sent down to them with a word they could believe; see the unnoticed becomes world notable, the small has grown world great; within one century afterwards, Arabia is at Granada on this end, at Delhi on that." (Heroes & Hero-Worship)

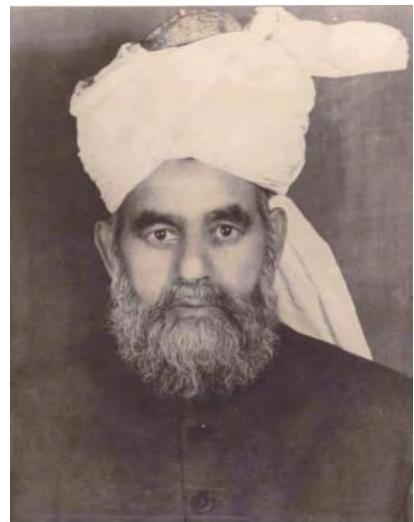
## Two Empires

Persian and Rome, the two greatest Empires of the time whom Arabia had to face were bitterly opposed to Islam and tried their utmost to destroy this new religion in its infancy but failed. Persians were mainly Zoroastrians, believers in a God of good and a God of evil, Ormuzd and Ahriman, and worshipped fire. The Roman Empire was Christian believing in the Godhead of Jesus Christ and the Trinity. In Egypt Christianity was a flourishing religion. The great Church of Clement, of Origin and of Athanasius, showed the success, which Christianity had achieved in Egypt. But wherever Christianity and Islam met, victory came to Islam, the inhabitants of the countries in which the struggle took place, became Muslim. This happened in Syria, Palestine, Egypt and parts of Africa. Professor Bosworth Smith writes in his book "Mohammad and Mohammedanism": "A great part of the Berbers of the desert were once Christian and they afterwards changed their religion and became Muslim".

## Profound Ignorance

In these days everybody can see in modern Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone how Christianity is retreating and followers of Christianity are turning towards Islam. Professor B. Smith writes:

*"The most recent historian of India remarks that the people of India are drifting slowly but surely toward the religion of the Prophet of Arabia rather than towards Christianity which is*



The late Maulana J. D. Shams

*"Many attempts have been made to call the attention of the English people to study Islam but they have not yet made any sincere effort to understand this great religion, which has been adopted by millions of their co-religionists in the past."*

*freely offered to them but which they are not prepared to accept. If this be true or nearly true how profound the importance to England even from an Imperial point of view of a sympathetic study of the religion."*

He adds:

*"Yet probably nowhere is there a profound ignorance of Islam and its founder and a greater indifference to what it is doing in the world than in England"* (page 55)

Therefore, it is the duty of England, for the sake of close relations with the Muslim world to study Islam and mark its teachings, which caused Christians of the early centuries to adopt this religion.

**M**any attempts have been made to call the attention of the English people to study Islam but they have not yet made any sincere effort to understand this great religion, which has been adopted by millions of their co-religionists in the past. I would like to give you some account of the marvelous teachings of Islam, which attracted the sincere, and the thoughtful among Christians to accept it. When the Holy Prophet of Islam appeared, the Jews were asserting that they had put Jesus Christ to an "accursed" death; and thus, according to their law they thought they had proved that he was a false prophet, an imposter. They accused him of many other things; that he was the offspring of sin, for instance.

### **Jesus "Cursed"**

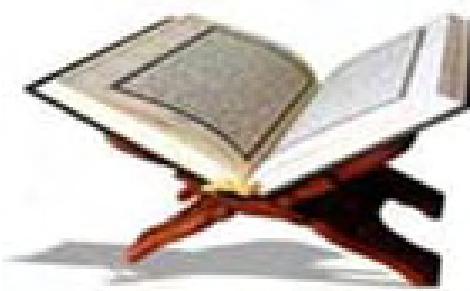
On the other hand, Christians believed in the Trinity, and that Jesus was God. According to the Mariamites or worshippers of Mary, the Trinity was God the Father, God the Son and God the Virgin Mary. In spite of their belief in his divinity, they also believed like the Jews, that he died an "accursed" death. St. Paul admits in Galatians III:

*"He was made a curse for us, for it is written 'Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree,'."*

They did not examine the meaning of the word 'cursed'. A man cannot be cursed unless his heart be far from God and empty of His love and knowledge. He must be in error like Satan and at enmity with God. It is for this that Satan is named the Accursed one.

### **Imputations Removed by the Holy Qur'an**

The Jews believed that Jesus was "accursed" and had no relation with God and that God's wrath descended upon him, and Christians agreed that undoubtedly he was "cursed", though it was to show his love for the people. But the Holy



*Therefore the  
Holy Quran,  
acquitting Mary  
and her son of all  
blemishes has  
cleared their  
ancestry, saying  
they were the  
offspring of  
Adam, Noah, and  
Abraham, the  
descendants of  
Amran chosen of  
God.*

Quran freed him from this curse. Rejecting the claim of the Jews, it proclaimed:

"They slew him not nor caused him to die on the cross, but he was made to appear to them like one crucified; and those who differ about him are certainly in doubt by reason of this fact, they have no knowledge thereof, but only follow conjecture, and they surely did not kill him and they did not make sure about it." (4:158)

Thus the Holy Quran clears Jesus of the "curse" imputed to him, and proclaims that Jesus was a beloved of God, one of His chosen prophets. The Holy Quran also mentions that the Jews were deprived of the spiritual blessings they had enjoyed and the help of God they had had, through their rejection of Jesus and for their accusing Mary of fornication. The declaration of the Holy Quran concerning Mary is that she kept her chastity; was an example for the righteous; the angels descended on her; and she was one of the chosen ones of God.

In the Book of the Genealogy of Jesus, according to St. Matthew, two of his ancestors, Phares and Zara of Tamar, were sons of fornication, and Booz was a son of Racheb the Harlot. Therefore the Holy Quran, acquitting Mary and her son of all blemishes has cleared their ancestry, saying they were the offspring of Adam, Noah, and Abraham, the descendants of Amran chosen of God.

### **Charges of rudeness**

The commandment was 'Honor thy father and thy mother' (Matt. 19:19), but it appears from Matthew 12:48, that Jesus showed a kind of rudeness toward his mother. Therefore the Holy Quran has cleared Jesus even of this false charge saying he was dutiful to his mother, that God did not make him insolent, unblessed (19:33).

### **The true position**

Now I come to the main point: what is the real position of Jesus Christ? Was he God as most Christians believe or was he man, a prophet or messenger of God? On this point the Holy Quran says thus:

"And when Jesus came with clear argument he said:

'I have come to you indeed with wisdom, and that I may make clear to you of what you differ in. Surely Allah is my Lord and your Lord so fear God and obey me and serve Him; this is the right path' (43:63,64,65). Jesus said: Surely I am a servant of Allah, He has given me the Book and made me a Prophet" (19:31). Surely they disbelieve who say that Allah is the Messiah the son of Mary (5:18).

And the Messiah said: 'O children of Israel! Serve Allah my Lord and your Lord.' Surely whoever associates others with Allah then Allah has forbidden him the garden, and his abode is the fire, and there shall be no helper for the unjust. Certainly they are disbelievers who say Allah is a third person of the three, while there is no God but one, and if they desist not from what they say, a painful chastisement shall befall those among them who disbelieve.

Will they not then turn to Allah and seek from Him remission of sins and forgiveness, and Allah is very forgiving and merciful (5:73,74,75).

The Messiah, son of Mary is but an apostle; apostles before him have indeed passed away and his mother was a righteous woman. They both used to eat food. See how We make the communications clear to them, and then behold how they turn away.

**S**ay, do you serve besides Allah that which has no power at all to do neither harm nor good! And it is Allah who is the most hearing, the very knowing. Say, O People of the

Book; do not exceed the limits in your religious beliefs unjustly, nor follow the desires of a people who have already gone astray before and led many astray from the right path. Those who disbelieved from among the Children of Israel were cursed by the tongue of David and Jesus son of Mary. This was because they disobeyed and used to exceed the limits" (5:77-79).

## Seven Points

In these verses the true position of Jesus has been described after clearing him of the charges imputed falsely to him. It is set forth in seven propositions:

(1) Jesus Christ never claimed he was God.

(2) On the contrary, he said, there was only One God "whom we serve and worship"

(3) Jesus was a prophet and a messenger of God; many prophets had passed away before him. If anybody cast cursory glances on the past, he would know at once that since the creation of the world, God never came in Person to guide people. He always sent a human being to guide fellow human beings. Jesus was a prophet like all of them. It is a gross error to think he was God come to guide human beings.

(4) Jesus was born of a woman, herself a righteous one. The word 'Mother' in the above verses points out the changes, which come upon a child in the womb of his mother and after his birth. If Jesus was really God, then his mother must have been of the same kind. But as is generally believed, she was a human being. So was her child.

(5) Mary and Jesus both ate food; which indicated that they were both humans. It is apparent that man needs for his sustenance and his system of digestion; so he calls constantly for food. So the use of food by Mary and Jesus shows that, like other human beings these were not free from the obligations imposed by nature. Therefore the belief that a person subject to all the changes, which come on a man's body, was God is an irrational belief.

(6) Jesus being human was weak; he could do no harm or good to anybody by himself.

(7) Dogmas like the Trinity and that Jesus was God are inventions of the people who follow the desires of pagans.

## Substantiated by the Gospels

The truth of these propositions is validated by the Gospels.

Regarding the first the Gospels are silent; the

claim that Jesus was God is mentioned nowhere in them.

**T**he second proposition is mentioned in Matthew 4:10. That Jesus said: "Get thee hence Satan: for it is written 'Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt you serve. Jesus also asked Mary to tell his disciples: "I ascend unto my father and your father, and unto my God and your God" (John 20:17).

The third proposition that Jesus was a prophet of God is mentioned in many places in the Gospels. For instance, he said, (and included himself in it):

"A prophet is not without honor save in his own country" (Matthew 13:57).

He also said:

"Nevertheless I must walk today and tomorrow and the day following, for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13:33).

He also said:

"I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the House of Israel" (Matt. 15:24). "I seek the will of the father which has sent me" (John 5:30).

His disciples also said about him that he was a prophet (Luke 24:19).

When he went to Jerusalem, the multitude said: "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth" (Matt. 21:11). See also John 6:14 and 9:17, Luke 7:39 and 7:16.

The fourth proposition does not require any quotations as all the Christians believe that it is so.

The fifth proposition that Jesus used to eat, is mentioned in Matthew 11:19:

"The son of Man came eating and drinking".

Luke 24:43 says:

"That he took a boiled fish and an honey-combe and did eat before his disciples."

In Mark 11:12 it is mentioned that when his disciples came from Bethany he was hungry.

The sixth proposition that he was a weak being, can be known from his saying:

"Father all thing are possible unto Thee, take away this cup from me." (Matt 14:36)

He also said:

"I can of mine own self do nothing, as I hear I judge, because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the father which hath sent me." (John 5:30)

The seventh proposition is that the people believe in the Godhead of Jesus; follow in the footsteps of earlier pagans. John M. Robertson in his book "Pagan Christ" writes:

*"A recent criticism has shown that the Christians have only followed previous idolatrous nations in deifying a man."*

## Christian Paganism

The first person who sowed the seed of this paganism in Christianity was St. Paul. Against the teachings of Jesus, he began to preach to the Gentiles and based his preaching to them on the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, saying, "He was raised from the dead according to my Gospel" (Tim. 2:8).

As he was a Roman (Acts 22:26), and on account of his journey in Syria, etc; he knew the mentality of the Gentiles, so he based his preaching on ideas current among them already, and which they could easily assimilate. For instance, Adonis, the Syrian God, was born of a virgin, was killed, and rose again in the spring every year. The maidens wept for him, and then rejoiced over his resurrection. Concerning Osiris, their God, they believed that he was slain and his image was placed in a box and brought forth with cries of "Osiris is Risen". Attis, the Phrygian God, was also born of a virgin named Nana. He was bled to death at the foot of a pine tree, that his blood renewed the fertility of the earth and thus brought a new life to humanity, and that he also rose from the dead (Frazer's Golden Bough IV, p. 29). Bacchus was also born of a virgin named "Demeted" on December 25<sup>th</sup>. He was slain to redeem humanity and was, therefore, called The Slain One, The Sin Bearer, and The Redeemer. His death followed by resurrection was celebrated. When dead, he descended into Hell, rose again (Blausobre, also Higgins' "Anacalypsis" vol. I p. 322).

**T**he Greeks claimed that Bromesus was a God who united his divinity with humanity. So he is of dual origin: divinity and humanity, in one body, man and God at the same time.

Luly Hook, a French missionary, writes in his Travels of Hook (vol. I p. 321-327) concerning Buddha:

"The Buddhists consider him to be a God in human shape, that he is a God who appeared incarnate, came to this world to teach men, to guide them, to redeem them, and to build for them the path to peace. The belief of redemption through a God appearing in body is general among the Buddhists."

Allan, in his India-Ancient and Modern page 297 writes, "As for Krishna, he is the greatest of all the gods incarnate, there is none of them

but a small particle from the Godhead while he is the God Vishnu who appeared in body."

The learned Done in his book (p. 112) writes that one of the beliefs of the ancient idolaters is connected with incarnation that God, incarnate as man, descends and lives among men. The belief is described in various ways from the imagination and stories of the Orientals.

So the truth of the Quranic propositions, that Christians in taking Jesus as God followed the desires of pagans is as clear as the sun for the students of ancient idolatry. Therefore, God says in the Holy Quran:

"And when Allah will say, "O Jesus, son of Mary: did you say to men accept me and my mother for two gods besides Allah? He will say: Glory be to Thee. It did not befit me to say that which I had no right to say. If I had said it Thou wouldest have known it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, but I don't know what is in Thy mind. Surely Thou art the great knower of the unseen things. I did not say to them but what Thou didst command me to say, that is, Serve Allah, my Lord and your Lord." (5:117-118)

### Attributes of God

Now let us examine the divinity of Jesus from another point of view, the point of view of the distinctive attributes of God. The Holy Quran says:

"There is no God but Allah. He is ever living, self-subsisting and does neither slumber nor sleep. For Him is whatever is in the Heavens and whatever is in the earth. Who can intercede with Him but with His permission? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot comprehend anything of His knowledge, except what He pleases. His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth, and the preservation of them tires Him not and He is the Most High, the Great." (2:256)

This verse points especially to the following attributes of God.

1. Ever-Living, 2. Self-Subsisting, 3. Free from sleep, slumber and fatigue, 4. King and possessor of whatever is in the Heavens and on Earth, 5. All-Knowing and 6. Most High and Great.

### Biblical attributes

These attributes of God are also mentioned in the Bible. Isaiah says, "The Everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the Earth, fainteth not, neither is weary (40:28). Jeremiah, the Prophet says, "The Lord is a Living God and an Everlasting King (10:10). "God is the King Eternal, Immortal" (Tim. 1:17)

### Jesus' attributes

But Jesus was born of Mary and used to sleep; as once he fell asleep in the ship (Matt.

# Who is Allah? The Attributes of God in Islam



Al Barri - The Beneficent



Dhul-Jalaali-wal-Ikraam - The Lord of Majesty and Bounty



Al Azeez - The Mighty



Al-Muta'al - The Most High; The Incomparably Great

While God's proper name is Allah, He has many beautiful names, collectively called *al-Asma'u'l Husnaa* (55:25), which signify His various attributes. While God's attributes are limitless, the Holy Quran & *Ahadith* (sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>saw</sup>) refer to over one hundred specific attributes. Attributes can be found in three major categories.

**1**

Attributes peculiar to Allah alone: These attributes are peculiar to Allah alone and not related in any way to His creatures. For example: *Al-Qaadir* (The Possessor of power and authority); *Al-Maajid* (The Glorious).

**2**

Attributes concerning the creation of the Universe: These attributes are related to the creation of the Universe and indicate the relationship between Allah and His creatures and His attitude towards them.

For example: *Al-Khaaliq* (The Creator) and *Al-Maalik* (The Sovereign).

**3**

Attributes concerning the actions of His creatures: These attributes come into operation as a result of the good or bad actions of Allah's creatures who are endowed with a will of their own. For example: *Ar-Raheem* (The Merciful); *Al-Afuww* (The Pardoner) and *Ar-Ra'oof* (The Compassionate).

According to the Holy Quran (51:57), the main objective of our creation is to worship Allah, our Creator. The philosophy of Islamic worship is to establish a loving relationship between Allah and His creatures, which is not possible unless we know and understand the attributes of Allah. Thus, by knowing the attributes of Allah, we will be able to derive abundant spiritual pleasure from our worship of Allah, the Exalted.

8:24) and he tasted the cup of death. Neither was he self-subsisting. He said, "As the Living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father (John 6:57); "Jesus liveth by the power of God (2Corinthians 13:4); "God is the King of all the earth" (Psalms 47:7); "For Him all that is in the Heavens and on the earth (1Chronicles 29:11). Jesus Christ said: "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have their nests, but the son of man hath not where to lay his head." (Matt. 8:20) He did not possess even a small portion of the earth.

God is All-knowing. "He knoweth the secrets of the heart" (Psalms 44:12). "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deut. 29:29). But Jesus Christ was not all-knowing. As he said, "But of that day and that Hour knoweth no man, no, not the Angels which are in heaven, neither the son, but the Father (Mark 13:32).

### **Jesus not God**

One day, being hungry and seeing a fig tree afar having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon, but he found nothing but leaves. (Mark 11:13) He also confessed that he was not the Most High and Greatest. "My Father is greater than I (John 14:28). If it is true that God is ever living, everlasting, Almighty (Exodus 6:1) and, as Jesus said, "With men this is impossible but with God all things are possible" (Matt. 20:26); if it is true that God is free from all human infirmities as slumber, sleep or weariness, that He is the King and Possessor of the Earth and Heaven, All-knowing and Most High and Great; and if it is also true, as proved by the quotations from the Gospels that Jesus did not possess any of these divine attributes, then rational and reasonable men have no choice but to believe that Jesus was not God.

### **Jesus, son of man**

In all the verses of the New Testament nowhere is there any mention of the word "Trinity", or "God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost". On the contrary, we find that in as many as seventeen (17) verses it says that the Father is the One and only God. Verses in which the Father is given the name God with all glory and dignity are 320 in number. Verses which mention the Father as God with special attributes are 105 in number. Verses in which it is said that prayer and praise should be offered to the Father alone, as the only possessor of dignity and power are 90 in number. In 63 places Jesus is called "son of man", in 72 places, "man" only, and in 19 places "a prophet" and in many places "servant and master". In 20 places God

is called "The God of Jesus" and Jesus himself cried, "O my God, my God; why hast Thou forsaken me?" In nearly 300 places, it is mentioned that Jesus could not act from his own self that he was not self-subsisting, and that he did according to the commandments of God and according to His Will. But despite these clear passages of the Gospels, Christians rely on some obscure and vague sentences and say that Jesus Christ claimed to be God.

### **Obscure and vague**

This is a large subject, which for the shortness of time at my disposal, I am unable to deal with fully. Let me mention, however, one or two passages out of the Gospels. For instance, Jesus Christ said: "He that hath seen me hath seen God" (John 14:9). The Christians say it means that Jesus and God were one. But a little thought will tell everyone that the word "seeing" in this saying is used metaphorically.

Because no man has seen God, nor can see (Tim. 6:16). Philip asked him to show them the Father, but he replied, that the Father cannot be seen with physical eyes, but He shows Himself by His works through His prophets.

The Holy Prophet of Islam also said: "Who hath seen me hath seen God."

*Moreover, Jesus said concerning his disciples, that they would not only perform the works as he had done but even greater.*

*Therefore, there is no saying of Jesus Christ in the Gospels to justify Christians in their assertion that Jesus was God.*

They mean that the attributes of God are manifest in them. Jesus also said: "I am in my Father and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20), but nobody says that his disciples were also God.

### **"Before Abraham"**

Christians also say that the meaning of the saying of Jesus: "Before Abraham was I am" shows that he was God. But his being before a created person, Abraham, does not mean that he was an everliving and everlasting person. If we read the conversation, which took place, in this connection, between the Jews and Jesus, we will understand the true meaning of this sentence. Thus he said: "If a man keep my commands he shall never see death", but the Jews took him literally and said:

"Art thou greater than our Father Abraham, which is dead, and prophets are dead, whom makest thyself?"

Then Jesus answered:

*"Your Abraham rejoices to see my day, he saw it and was glad."*

Nobody can say that Jesus Christ meant Abraham actually saw his days. It only means that he saw this in a state of vision. But the Jews took his answer literally and said: "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?" He answered: "Verily, verily, I say unto ye, before Abraham was I am"; which means: "Are you surprised at my saying that Abraham saw my day? I was before him also, as it was decided by God that I should be the Messiah."

So, Jesus' conversation was spiritual and metaphorical, not literal. But even as the Jews took it literally, so do the Christians. His saying was similar to that of the Holy Prophet of Islam when he said:

*"I am a prophet while Adam had not yet been born."*

### **"Son of God"**

Jesus said: "I am the son of God" (John 10:36).

He was a son of God as the other prophets and the righteous ones were sons of God.

*"The peacemakers shall be called the children of God."* (Matt. 5:9)

*"Your Father is one which is in Heaven."* (Matt. 23:9)

Adam was a son of God. (Luke 2)

God said: "Israel is my son, even my first-born." (Exodus 4:22,23)

Judges are Gods, and all of you sons of God. (Psalms 82:6)

Regarding Solomon, God said: "He shall be my son, and I will be his Father".

(Chronicles 1, 22:10, 17:23)

*"And all the sons of God shouted for Joy".* (Job 38:7)

Jesus Christ himself explained the meaning of his sonship for when the Jews said: "We have one Father, even God", Jesus answered:

"If God were your Father, then you would love me as He sent me. You are of your father

*In all the verses of the New Testament nowhere is there any mention of the word “Trinity”, or “God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost.”*

**17** verses say that the **Father is the One and only God.**

**19** verses where Jesus is called **“a prophet.”**

**20** verses where God is called **“The God of Jesus.”**

**63** verses where Jesus is called **“the Son of man.”**

**72** verses where Jesus is called **“man.”**

**90** verses where it is said that prayer and praise should be offered to the Father alone as the **only possessor of dignity and power.**

**105** verses in which the Father is called as **God with special attributes.**

**300** verses where it is mentioned that Jesus could not act from his own self

**320** verses where the Father is given the name  
**God with all glory and dignity.**

the Devil, and the lusts of your father will ye do (John 8:38). So, just as the Jews were sons of the Devil for rejecting truth and following their lusts, likewise, Jesus was the son of God for obeying the commandments of God. Further, according to St. Mark, the Centurion said: "Truly Jesus was the son of God (Mark 15:39). "Certainly he was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). This shows clearly that the words "son of God" were used for righteous men.

**T**he wonders and miracles which Jesus performed were not a proof of his divinity because he said that the false prophets shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that if it were possible they would deceive the very elect (Matt. 24:24). The wicked will do great wonders so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men (Revelations 3:13). Moreover, Jesus said concerning his disciples, that they would not only perform the works as he had done but even greater. Therefore, there is no saying of Jesus Christ in the Gospels to justify Christians in their assertion that Jesus was God. Christians believe that this same Jesus was God who was born of a woman, was circumcised, ate, slept, had no place in which to lay his head, was poor, mocked by the Jews, slapped, crowned with thorns, spat at, abused, despised and finally put on the cross, who cried out: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" and who died an "accursed" death, was buried and: went down into Hell." (Common Prayers Church of England, p. 163).

### **Jesus was only a prophet**

The Holy Quran taught that Jesus was one of the chosen prophets of God like other great prophets, who came to guide the people. That God loved him so much, spoke to him abundantly, gave him many signs and clear proofs in support of his truth. He gave him wisdom and knowledge of the Book; and teachings in which was light and guidance for the people. He suffered the afflictions of his enemies and bore them steadfastly, as indeed did the other prophets. Thus this was the reason that Christians, who entered into religious controversy with Muslims, found that the true position of Jesus Christ was, that which is stated in the Holy Quran. Therefore, they became Muslims. We believe, on the basis of prophesies, that when the people of this country pay attention to religion and begin to inquire into the true religion, they will accept Islam and become Muslims, as did their predecessors in the East.

We are sure this will happen, that only one God will be worshipped in the world. May God bring that day near. Amen♦

#### **- A Saying of The Holy Prophet Muhammad <sup>sa</sup> On Forgiveness and Forbearance**

Ibn Mas'ud relates: I can recall seeing the Holy Prophet while he recounted that a Prophet of Allah who was beaten and wounded by his people kept wiping the blood away from his face and supplicated: Allah do forgive my people for they know not.

(Bokhari and Muslim).

“ ”

*The Holy Quran  
taught that Jesus was  
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him wisdom and  
knowledge of the  
Book; and teachings  
in which was light  
and guidance for the  
people*

# Buddhism

## The Concept of God in Buddhism

By Imran Ghumman

*“Confess and believe in God (Is’ana) who is the worthy object of obedience..... Oh strive ye to obtain this inestimable treasure”*  
...said Buddha as quoted by King Ashoka in one of his inscriptions at Pardohli, a rock located in the Eastern bank of the river Katak, twenty miles from Jagan Nath, India.

Buddha's (563–483 BC) real name was Siddhartha Guatama<sup>as</sup>. His father was a Kashatri, a caste considered to be upper class found in Hindu's caste system. The clan to which the Gautamas belonged was the Shakya clan. This clan lived at the foothills of the Himalayas. His mother Maya was reported to have immaculately conceived Siddhartha<sup>as</sup>, i.e., Siddhartha's was a virgin birth. Legend has it that Siddhartha<sup>as</sup> appeared to his mother in a vision as a white elephant carrying a lotus and went into her womb.

A seer later said that Siddhartha would either become a great holy man or a great ruler. His father desired for his son to follow in his stead and thus shielded him from religion. Siddhartha<sup>as</sup> had fancy clothing, a group of dancing girls, female musicians, and other material things relished by the wealthy. In his twenties, he was married to a woman named Yashodara and had a son whose name was Rahul. He started to realize that the life he was living was frivolous.

A legend named “Four Sights” indicates that he saw four symbols that his father did not want him to see: *a bent old man, a sick person, a dead person, and a monk searching for a state of eternal contentment rather than temporary pleasure.* Upon seeing the first three, Siddhartha<sup>as</sup> was saddened of life being brief and depressed from the reality of suffering, aging, and dying. Seeing the monk inspired him to live a life of renunciation.



*A close examination of Buddha's biography reveals that in his lifestyle, he was not significantly different from other prophets of God, who appeared in different parts of the world.*

As a result, around the age of twenty-nine, he gave up his luxuries, left his wife and son, shaved his hair from his head, and wore a stiff robe. His ambition in life was to no longer live the life of his father but to completely attach himself to the pain and suffering as depicted by the Four Sights.

His first attempt at such a task was to do what anybody else would do: study with a teacher who had many students. But Siddhartha<sup>as</sup> was not satisfied by this study. He went through six years of extreme self-denial methods, contact to intense heat and cold, brutal fasting,

and other almost self-torturous methods. Eventually, he realized that this would not lead to the enlightenment he desired.

He began to recover from that which he had inflicted upon himself for the previous six years. He began to eat once again and reflected on what he did. This change led him to the famous incident where he was seated in deep meditation underneath the Bodhi tree and experienced supreme enlightenment. At this point, he went through four states in which he remembered all of his previous lives, then he fully grasped the concepts of dying and being born again (ultimately a wheel of life), and finally he figured out as to why suffering exists and how to end it. Upon having this experience, people said that a light shined from his body, and Sidharta Guatama<sup>as</sup> was transformed into the Buddha.

In any holy man's journey, the temptation of evil is never far. Mara, a humanized version of evil, is said to have come and persuade the Buddha to keep such complex ideas to himself since the outside people were too simple for such thoughts. However, Mara's attempts to stray Buddha failed. Buddha spent the rest of his life walking from village to village teaching the growing group of people who were following him. Many, it is said, were transformed simply by meeting him.

Buddha's disciples were “The Sanghas” and were free from the widespread caste system. His stepmother and wife became members of the “Bhikshunis,” a congregation of nuns following Buddha. At his father's demise his stepmother was part of the Bhikshunis. It is assumed that Buddha died at the age of eighty. He had preached his whole life for people from suffering. A blacksmith served him a poisonous last meal. Buddha became extremely ill and death loomed before him. He taught one more student along his way to the next village. After that, he

sent a message to the blacksmith that he should not blame himself or feel negative emotions for the meal because he had offered food and that was a reward in itself. His final moments were spent lying on a stone couch with monks around him paying their final respects. He told them to be aware of themselves to such an extent that they vanquish the suffering of people seeking temporary pleasures.

**A** close examination of Buddha's biography reveals that in his lifestyle, he was not significantly different from other prophets of God, who appeared in different parts of the world. Buddha was a prophet of God who found the Hindu concept of many gods to be abhorrent. He was a believer of one God and propagated this very belief among his followers. I will examine this more closely after a brief historical background of early Buddhism.

All researchers unanimously accepted that there has never been any official scripture available for the disciples of Buddhism. The philosophy and the personality of Buddha was transmitted verbally for a long time until King Ashoka (273-232 BC) appeared some three centuries after his spiritual master. It was during the illustrious reign of Ashoka when the teachings of Buddha were written on rocks and stupas in the form of inscriptions. These inscriptions, carved into rocks, were ordered to be made throughout his kingdom after his conversion to Buddhism and are known as 'the Edicts'. Around thirty-three inscriptions have been discovered, in a language called Prakrit, a forerunner to the Sanskrit language. None of these inscriptions mentioned Buddhism as a polytheistic belief. These writings are of vital importance because

## *In spite of the fact that the teachings of Buddha came into being a few centuries after Buddha, this above mentioned writing contains enough evidence to indicate that Buddha was neither an atheist nor an agnostic but was indeed a believer in unity of God.*

these writings serve the purpose of understanding Buddha's philosophy and way of life from the vantage point of Ashoka. Ashoka's authority as a true representative of Buddha has never been challenged. Dr. Le Bon writes:

*"It is not in the books, but in the monuments that one should study what Buddhism used to be."*

Ashoka was not only instrumental in setting up missionary network to spread the beautiful message of Buddha as far as he could but he also gathered about 500 scholars to bring forth the unifying message of Buddha and named this belief as Mahayana, the new belief, in place of Hanyana, the old belief.

Historians generally conclude that an understanding of Buddhism given by Ashoka should have a stronger claim to acceptance. Against this understanding such views clearly at variance with Ashoka's may safely be rejected. However, if the early sources seem to contradict each other, caution has to be applied in accepting one and rejecting the other. I will now analyze the evidence found in history to prove the existence of God in Buddhism.

1) Some individual Buddhists do relate to certain higher beings, such as the goddess Tara, as an independent and real being with power over their destiny. For these practitioners Tara is their sole refuge, their greatest object of veneration and their trusted guardian and protector. What this belief suggests is that the inclination to seek refuge in an external source is something deeply natural for us as human beings.

2) The Tibetan form of Buddhism not only advocates the existence of superhuman deities or demons a part and parcel of their faith, but also believes in communication with them. The qualities of a living God who rewards his servants for their noble deeds and also make them accountable for their immoral actions are paramount. The second part of Tibetans belief, i.e., communication with Supreme Being, is similar to divine revelation that any person can receive.

3) Buddha never rejected the concept of one God, although he rejected the concept of many gods found in Hinduism. To support their atheistic belief, faltered Buddhas refer to the contempt shown by the Buddha to Hindu Pundits towards their gods. In this conversation Buddha was saying that worldly-minded Brahmins could not lead man to God, for they knew nothing of Him. On the contrary, Buddha claimed to be "Enlightened One." Thus, the faltered Buddhas believed that Buddha must have rejected the idea of one God in totality in spite of having no proof of such rejection.

4) Many Buddhists venerate the image of the Buddha in the manner of worship similar to worship of God found in other religions, asking him for success in personal life and dealings. This is perhaps additional evidence that man is a worshipping animal, with God consciousness hard-wired into the human brain.

5) Arthur Lillie in his book, *India in Primitive Christianity*, writes in his seventh stupa:

*"Thus spake Devanampiya Piyadasi: Wherefore from this very hour, I have caused religious discourses to be preached, I have appointed religious observances that mankind, having listened thereto, shall be brought to follow in the right path, and give glory to God (Is'ana)."*

The usage of God in singular is of significance importance. From this reference it is quite obvious that the earlier sources portray Buddha as a dedicated believer in God (may God bless his soul). In spite of the fact that the teachings of Buddha came into being a few centuries after Buddha, this above mentioned writing contains enough evidence to indicate that Buddha was neither an atheist nor an agnostic but was indeed a believer in unity of God.

6) At the end of the same chapter one of the followers of Buddha, Pingiya, who was enfeebled by old age, concludes his discussion with the following statement:

*"Assuredly I shall go to the immovable, the unshakeable, the likeness of which does not exist anywhere. I have no doubt about this. Thus consider me to be one whose mind is so disposed."*

This illustrates the hope and expectation of a disciple of Buddha that after his death he will meet his Lord, who is described as immovable, unshakeable and without likeness. This is a description of God in full agreement with that found in other religious scriptures.

7) In the village of Manaskata, which was the center of Brahmanic religious controversy once, Vasettha and Bharadvaga of the same village, while taking a walk after their bath in the river, began to debate a religious doctrine. Neither of the two could convince the other of the correctness of the opinions of their respective gurus. Vasettha, the young Brahman, suggested that it should be taken to the court of Buddha. This agreed upon they proceeded to present the issue to Buddha seeking his wise counsel. During the meeting, Bharadvaga, the young Brahman, remained silent and Vasettha asked the questions. Before re-

sponding to the question, Buddha posed some counter questions.

**F**irst he asked, "Did any Brahmins versed in the Three Vedas ever see Brahma face to face?" The answer was "No". Then Buddha asked Vasettha, "If any of the Brahmins or their pupils of the previous seven generations had seen Brahma," and the answer was again, "No". Then Buddha asked them if they themselves claimed that they had ever seen Brahma. Again the answer was, "No". Then he asked Vasettha, "If a man, born and brought up in Manasakata was asked the way to Manasakata, would that man be in any doubt or difficulty in answering that question." Vasettha answered:

"Certainly not, Gotama! And why? If the man had been born and brought up in Manasakata, every road that leads to Manasakata would be perfectly familiar to him."

At this point Buddha expounded:

"That man, Vasettha, born and brought up at Manasakata might, if he were asked the way to Manasakata, fall into doubt and difficulty, but

### ***For people who respond to the call of God, irrespective of their caste, the path to God is made easy for them. For one who fears God, all human passions such as anger, jealousy, prejudice etc., cease to dominate him. When one transcends them, one is likely to imitate Godly attributes and acquire them.***

to the Tathagata," (the fully enlightened one, meaning himself), when asked touching the path which leads to the world of Brahmā, there can be neither doubt nor difficulty. For Brahma, I know, Vasettha, and the world of Brahma, and the path which lead unto it. Yea, I know it even as one who has entered the Brahmā world, and has been born within it!"<sup>6</sup>

Buddha's argument was that every Godly soul undergoes a great transformation in this very life and is bestowed a paradise while still in this world, the paradise which is none other than finding a living God. This living God nourishes his soul and showers His love which becomes its nurture and it drinks at this fountain of life and He enlightens the way and guides them through thick and thin. Buddha went on to claim that he himself was the one who could lead man

to God because he had been in communion with Him and had come from Him.

Now it is obvious that Buddha did have faith in the existence of one Supreme God and claimed to have come from Him. Buddha knew God better than the villagers of Manasakata knew their own village or the roads leading to it. Many great prophets have made similar claims of witnessing a life of eternity with Him here on earth, even before death transports them to the otherworldly life. All Divine messengers share this eternal state of communion with Him, Buddha being no exception. Buddha referred to God as Brahma because this was a familiar term to the Hindus, who applied it to the Supreme God among their gods.

As the dialogue continues, the position is made even clearer.

When he had thus spoken, Vasettha, the young Brahman, said to the Blessed One:

*"So has it been told me, Gotama, even that the Samana Gotama knows the way to a state of union with Brahmā. It is well! Let the venerable Gotama be pleased to show us the way to a state of union with Brahmā, let the venerable Gotama save the Brahman race!"<sup>7</sup>*

Having heard Vasettha, Buddha did not reject his prayer and aspirations with reference to Brahma as being unreal or meaningless — a definite proof of his approval of whatever he spoke of the Brahma and His communion with His chosen ones. For people who respond to the call of God, irrespective of their caste, the path to God is made easy for them. For one who fears God, all

human passions such as anger, jealousy, prejudice etc., cease to dominate him. When one transcends them, one is likely to imitate Godly attributes and acquire them. This whole dialogue is worthy of special attention by those who want to understand Buddha's attitude towards God.

The erroneous popular belief about Buddhism as a non-Godly religion is largely based on the teachings presented by Western scholars. These Western scholars did not bother to conduct their own research but rather heavily relied on the translation of Buddha scripture done by early Buddhists from Pali language. Their baseless atheistic beliefs oozed into the pure teachings of Buddha to pollute it. Moreover, instead of drawing their own inferences directly from a study of reliable Buddhist sources, they leaned entirely on the beliefs about Buddhism

prevailing among the major Buddhist sects. Dr. Gustav Le Bon (1841-1931) writes:

"Unfortunately, the study of Indian monuments has been completely neglected by European scholars. The specialists of Indian studies, through whom we have come to learn of Buddhism, had never visited India. They had only studied this religion in books; an unfortunate twist of fate made them chance upon the works of philosophical sects written five or six centuries after the death of Buddha, these being absolutely alien to the religion practiced in reality. The metaphysical speculations which had so astonished Europeans by their profundity were in fact nothing new. Ever since the books of India have been better known, these have been found in the writings of philosophical sects which had developed during the Brahmanic period."<sup>8</sup>

Among the best known scholars of India, only a solitary voice was raised by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (as) in 1899 who, in his book *Jesus in India*, wrote,

".....Buddha also believed in the existence of the Devil, so he also believed in hell and heaven, in angels and in the Day of Judgment. The charge that the Buddha did not believe in God is pure fabrication. The Buddha did not believe in Vedanta and in corporeal gods of the Hindus. He criticized the Vedas a great deal. He does not believe in the existing Vedas. He regards them as corrupt and interpolated."

The complete denial of all passions is therefore claimed by Buddhists to be the absolute truth. Greed for material wealth, power, or even the love of others, when unfulfilled, results in the agony and frustration of the deprived. Similarly, hatred also plays havoc with one's peace of mind. All these forces weaken the spiritual powers of man. This also emphasizes that because man's intrinsic nature cannot be changed and his lust for ever more cannot be stilled, full contentment and satisfaction can never be achieved without severing all ties with matter.

Instead of attempting to struggle and conquer the baser motivations and to bring them under the command of the soul, the soul is advised to beat a retreat and vacate the arena of life on earth. All that is born out of desire to satisfy one's ego, is lowly, materialistic, ignoble and should be sacrificed for the sake of the ultimate good of the same ego. The peace achieved through such an escape amounts to little more than death, i.e., the negation of life.

If the philosophy of absolute self-negation is followed to its logical conclusion, it will inevitably lead to the extinction of the human race. To ascribe this inspirational gibberish to the Divinely-enlightened wisdom of Buddha does him no honor. This is not the Divine cup of revelation from which he drank deep and became immortal.

# Hinduism

## The Concept of God in Hinduism

By Bilal Rana

**Our behavior and relationship with the world around us is a reflection of the nature we believe God to possess.** All teachings are intertwined with and emerge from a religion's concept of God. It is reflected in the way its adherents pray, in their sacrifices, rituals and all that ultimately can be described as the 'texture' of a religion.

Of all major world religions, Hinduism as it is practiced today is arguably the most challenging to define in terms of this concept in that it ranges from one extreme to the other – that is, from absolute monotheism to belief in an infinite number of gods.

### What is Hinduism?

Hinduism is the world's oldest major religion which is still in existence today. It is a worldwide religious tradition largely followed by the people of India. There is no mention of 'Hinduism' as a religion in its sacred texts. Classical dictionaries define 'Hindu' as the name of a people who consider the area from the River Indus down to the sea-shore as their fatherland and sacred territory.

Therefore, Hinduism is a name that has been coined in modern literature. The name *Sanatan Dharma*, or 'original religion', is the name used in its holy scriptures. *Adi Deb Narayan Rishi* was the pioneer teacher (Bishno Bhagobat Puran 7/11/5, 6). Some scholars think that *Adi Deb* and Adam were one and the same person. The word *sanatan* means what was, what is, and what will remain permanent, and that which describes 'eternal religion' is known as the *Sanatan Dharma*. Krishna also believed in everlasting religion (Mahabharat 5/83/12). The term *Sanatan Dharma* can be translated into Arabic as 'Dinul Qaim', a term also used in the Holy Quran which means 'eternal religion in conformity with nature'.

### The Hindu Triad

There are three fundamental gods in the Hindu tradition, which are:

1. Brahma, *the Creator*
2. Vishnu, *the Sustainer*
3. Shiva, *the Destroyer*

These are manifestations of the One Supreme Spirit, Brahman. He is the Absolute Authority, the eldest of their gods, and occupies the highest station among them all.

### Avatars

According to Hindu belief there are ten avatars, or incarnations of Vishnu, which represent the Divine and whose mission is to revive spirituality in mankind:

1. Matsya, *the fish*
2. Kurma, *the tortoise*
3. Varaha, *the boar*
4. Nara Simha, *the man lion*
5. Vamana, *the dwarf*
6. Parusha Rama, *Rama with an axe*



7. Rama Chandra, *the hero of the Ramayana epic*
8. Krishna, *the main character in the Bhagavad-Gita*
9. Buddha, *the founder of Buddhism*
10. Kalki, *the tenth avatar who is yet to come*

(list taken from *Book of Religious Knowledge*, by Waheed Ahmad)

### Deification of Man

A glance at religious history reveals that man repeatedly deifies himself. The worship of temporal beings, including prophets or saints, raises many provocative questions. Driven by fear or by love, mankind has 'worshipped' monarchs, powerful bullies, prophets, sages, martyrs, carved images, objects and coins of monetary value – the awe of which begin to dictate one's sense of 'wrong and right'. When you examine the ultimate cause of social, moral and political turmoil in society, we find that this misguided worship or zeal destroys the peace in the hearts and minds of individuals and as a result the values of society begin to slide. This is the momentous influence the concept of God has on the scheme and fate of civilization.

A warning regarding this very point has been given by the Supreme God to Krishna in the following words, after Krishna had been commissioned to reform mankind:

"Unintelligent men who do not know Me perfectly, think that I, the

Supreme Being, was impersonal before and have now assumed this personality. Due to their small knowledge, they do not know My Higher nature, which is Imperishable and Supreme" (Bhagavad Gita 7:24)

### The Oneness of God

A superficial glance at Hinduism may beguile many naïve students to think it is an idolatrous religion. In fact, any religion which appears idolatrous to us today must have been fundamentally monotheistic if one is to believe in the universal principle that all religions have emanated from the same source. Otherwise the arguments between different religions of the world would never cease assuming that each came from a different source or a different God.

While it is argued that so many world religious texts are interpolated, distorting the original substance of a faith, we propose for the sake of argument that God never allows a scripture which He reveals to be so grossly tainted that man cannot still find clear, palpable remnants of the original teaching which demonstrates the unity in all faiths. This scientific or ‘detective’ approach is crucial and a careful adjustment of the microscope can reveal a dramatically new story altogether and bring the true, crisp, and rational picture into focus.

Here are several demonstrations of the Unity of God as presented in sacred Hindu scriptures:

1. “He who is the Creator of everything, the Supreme Soul, He has no form and there is no model or Idol which can show any resemblance to Him” (Yajur Veda 32/3 Mantra).

2. ”He has no hands, no feet, yet He is the fastest and He can grasp perfectly. He has no eyes, no ears, yet He can see and hear flawlessly” (ibid 3/19)

3. “He is One only without a second.”

(Chandogya Upanishad 6:2:1)

4. “Of Him there are neither parents nor lord.”

(Svetasvatara Upanishad 6:9)

5. “No eye can perceive that entity but He can be felt in the depth of an eye” (Cano 1/7).

6. “He was not born of any mother or father.” (Kotho 1/2/18)

7. “He is finer than the finest and He knows all.”

(Mundok 3/1/7)

8. “Param Brahma had no birth and is free of death.” (kotho 1/2/18)

9. “They enter darkness, those who worship the natural elements (i.e. wind, fire, water, etc.). They sink deeper in darkness, those who worship sambhuti.” (Yajurveda 40:9)

10. “He is the Creator of the entire universe and He is the sustainer of all creation.” (Mundok 1/11)

11. “Never salute any other god. Never worship any other god. Never even think of any other god. A person who abandons that God who lives in his heart, who is his real master and is the genuine Ishwar Narayan, and salutes someone else with affection, such a person is a sinner.” (Ananda Shanghita 13/26/7)

He is depicted as formless, flawless and immortal, whose dignity is distinct from and far above all created, or inferior forms as incarnation.

### Polytheism and the Divine in Nature

“All are but parts of one stupendous whole, whose body Nature is, and God the soul.” Long before the 18<sup>th</sup> century English poet Alexander Pope penned this mystical lyric, there existed in many sects of the Hindu faith a deep reverence of nature. To many today, the various manifestations, or attributes, of God have been given special recognition as gods in their own right, each with selective powers and roles. While many Hindus insist that the essence of theology in Hinduism is Oneness of God, He nonetheless has many manifestations of Himself, and each one can be worshipped, praised and prayed to separately.



In accordance with our theory that all faiths at their inception preached the Oneness of God, these beliefs can be explained by the tendency to take angels and in simplistic fashion ascribe to them creative ‘god-like’ powers. In some religions we find that out of angels, gods are created. A case in point, the Holy Ghost, which appeared to Jesus in the form of a dove in the Bible (Matthew 3:16), conveyed tidings or revelations from God to Jesus. Though in the Bible, this dove, or ‘Holy Spirit’ was merely described as an angel appearing to Jesus, today it is acknowledged as an independent entity and partner within the overall Christian Deity. For many, the dove has become a symbol of the Christian faith. In creating countless angels to guide, move and govern the laws of nature which God has dictated for the universe, millions of ‘gods’ that are working as partners appear as manifestations or attributes of God.

### God ‘in’ Man

Prophets, who were sent by God to guide mankind by way of example, have always said that ‘the Light of God is within me.’ If they did not say this, they would be contradicting themselves. Jesus <sup>as</sup>, Rama Chandra <sup>as</sup>, Krishna <sup>as</sup>, Buddha <sup>as</sup> and Muhammad <sup>sa</sup> were all known to say this. Prophets and divines from all religions have spoken in parables. However, it often happens that parables and metaphors are taken too literally by followers of a religion and from there on the underlying idea is lost. Nevertheless, the authenticity and brotherhood of all prophets is an essential notion if we are to assume that only One God has been revealing Himself to different nations over different periods. This is what has been stated in the Holy Quran in the verse:

“There are no people (in the world) to whom We have not sent a Warner.” (The Holy Quran 35:25)

It becomes incumbent upon us to believe in all prophets and that the essence of their teaching was exactly the same. Having stated this, I quote



*Mahatma Gandhi, India's foremost modern day icon, said “If someone were to ask me what the most important outward feature of Hinduism was, I would suggest that it was the idea of cow protection.” It is intriguing that of all the animal kingdom, the cow stands out as particularly useful and beneficial to man, perhaps like no other animal.*

the Holy Prophet of Islam, Muhammad <sup>sa</sup>, who said: “There was a prophet of God in India who was dark in color and his name was Kahan.”

(“Taarikh-i-Hamdaan Dailami” Baab-ul-Kaaf. See Pocket book p: 854 by Malik Abdur Rehman Khadim 6th edition Published in 1952.)

Anyone familiar with the Hindu tradition understands well that Krishna is described as dark-completed invariably throughout the Hindu traditions, and that his birth name was *Kanhai*, which closely resembles *Kahan*. Furthermore, the meaning of the name ‘Krishna’ – though it is generally understood as “the enlightened one” — is literally translated as ‘dark-completed one’ in Sanskrit.

### Idol Worship

Although Hindus do not believe idols or portraits have any powers, they argue that the worship of statues is merely symbolic and is meant to evoke emotion and to create an atmosphere needed for prayer. Whereas in Islam, God is not visible in any form as neither the prayers which are being offered and worshiping any intermediary objects which represent God is prohibited. Emotions are not to be created artificially, and therefore dim lighting, incense and pictures or statues are prohibited in the mosque.

### Hindu and Greek Mythology

The fact that Greek and Hindu mythology share much in common may only be a casual coincidence. It has been argued, nonetheless, that their may have been some religious exchange between these two ancient civilizations. The famous Greek mathematician Pythagoras was held to have traveled to the Indus River valley where he was trained in Hindu traditions and philosophy. He became the first Greek to refer to himself as a philosopher, and had a fellowship which lasted 250 years after his death. Like the Hindus, Pythagoras held that the soul was trapped in the body and he also believed in reincarnation. As a preeminent figure of the time, some argue that elements of the Hindu pantheon crept into the Greek concept of the divinities, including the themes of the Vedic Triad or Trinity and other glaringly obvious trademarks pointing back to incarnations of God in the Hindu tradition. A similar ‘contagious’ exchange of ideas has been theorized between Hinduism and Buddhism in the neighboring Far East.

### Theology of the Cow

Mahatma Gandhi, India's foremost modern day icon, said “If someone

were to ask me what the most important outward feature of Hinduism was, I would suggest that it was the idea of cow protection." It is intriguing that of all the animal kingdom, the cow stands out as particularly useful and beneficial to man, perhaps like no other animal. The popular catch phrase 'holy cow' was probably derived from this Hindu philosophy. At times a source of meat, dairy milk, and hide, and at others of hard labor or even religious inspiration, this animal has become the object of worship at various times all over the world. Ancient Egyptians, Mesopotamians and Jews have all incorporated cow or calf worship into their practices. Perhaps it was because of this repeated tendency, which is now practiced by 900 million Hindus world over, that the second and longest chapter of the Holy Quran was named *Al Baqarah*, (The Cow). A specific warning against cow worship can be found in this chapter, in which Moses says:

"O my people, you have indeed wronged yourselves by taking the calf for worship." (The Holy Quran, 2:55)

It is believed that while early Hindu divines did eat beef, the cow began to be seen as a sacred animal not to be eaten and rather to be hailed and worshipped.

Krishna was also known as *Gopala*, which means 'caretaker of the cows'. A similar expression is given with reference to Jesus in the scriptures. He is called the 'shepherd of sheep', a similitude describing him as a tender to spiritual wayfarers and as sheep and lamb are common in pastures of Palestine, the analogy of the cow was used in India, where even today the cow can be found crowding the streets of Dehli.

## Reincarnation

The concept of death and the reappearance of souls can be found in various forms in every religion. This concept is in fact inalienable to the belief in the existence of God Himself. As far as to the concept of the Justice of God in Hinduism is concerned, man will continually be brought back to this temporal world in some shade of life, of either high or low order. If one is good, he may be raised among princely stock or if he is evil he may return as a lower form of life, like a frog, alligator, snake or even a microscopic life form. This speculative thinking springs from the unknown mystery of life after death. In the Islamic tradition, this rebirth is also described in worldly terminology, i.e. with reference to a human body and to earthly rewards and punishments, such as 'fruits' or 'fire'. But these are understood to be only metaphors and Hinduism too may have had the same metaphorical spirit but has been read literally.

## 'Castes' of Man

In Hinduism there are four major castes which classify the inequality of human beings:

1. Brahman – *the divines, or priests*
2. Kshatriya – *the nobles, or warriors*
3. Vaisya – *the farmer, or mercantile*
4. Shudra – *the peasant, or laborer*

A fifth caste also exists, beneath the four above, known as the Panchamas (*untouchables*). Coincidentally, in the Holy Quran a parallel of four main 'castes', a term which can be used loosely, are also described; the Prophets, the Martyrs, the Truthful and the Righteous (Holy Quran, 4:69). Or similarly, three fundamental states of man are described also in the Holy Quran: *Nafse Ammarah* (the self that incites to evil), *Nafse Lawwama* (the reproving self) and *Nafse Mutmainnah* (the soul at rest) which can be summarized as the 'physical, moral and spiritual' states of man in relation to God. In Islam the hierarchy of these 'castes' are neither social, nor tribal or political, but strictly spiritual. Some Hindu reformists

protest the current caste system as practiced in rural India today citing the spiritual castes have evolved into a literal social caste system, while arguing that the Hindu castes can be transcended as they are actually part of one's inner-consciousness. (*Bhagavad-Gita, As It Is*. Commentary by A.C. Bhkivedanta Swami Prabhupada, 7<sup>th</sup> edition, pg. 238-239). Therefore, a sinner is described as 'untouchable' in the sense that his behavior and personality are repulsive before God. Similarly the saintly or virtuous are 'divines'.

## Yoga: From Past to Present

Yoga, which means *union with the divine*, is central to Hinduism and has influenced spiritual practices throughout the world and has recently become very popular in the west. Hindus insist that the postures prescribed by yoga are part of an ancient spiritual tradition revealed to their *rishis* (Hindu divines). They argue that the practice of yoga, which includes postures such as bowing and prostration, deeply influence the human psyche. It is intriguing to discover that the western world fascination with yoga has, at its origins, the philosophy and ritual worship of One God. It is similar in ways to the Islam mode of worship known as *salat* which comprises of precise movements, each reflecting corresponding movements in the heart. Similarly, Jesus stuck poses in a codified manner to evoke emotions in prayer at Gethesame. One also wonders if, like yoga, the initial philosophy behind the ancient East Asian tradition known as *T'ai Chi*, which has been called "moving meditation," also started out as God-worship.

## Monotheistic Strands of Hinduism

Monotheistic strands of Hinduism have from time to time remerged. The Sikh religion, which is in fact described as a hybrid of Hindu and Islamic traditions, is such an example. The point of departure between Sikhism and Hinduism is the Sikh belief that God is one and cannot be subdivided with representations in the forms of animals or natural elements. Yet, many Sikhs are regarded as fully Hindu by Hindus in some areas of the Punjab in India. Hinduism therefore has an attitude which accommodates both strict monotheists and idolaters. It appears therefore that the concept of God in Hinduism is relatively decentralized, as compared to other faiths such as Islam.

## Conclusion

Throughout this essay we have argued that metaphors are a way of speaking in which one thing is being expressed in terms of another, whereby this bringing together throws new light and new personality on the character of what is being described. We would like to end by casting that same mystifying language used not only in Hindu literature, but in all religious literature in fact:

"Indeed, you alone know yourself by your own Internal Potency, O Supreme Person, origin of all, Lord of all beings, God of gods, Lord of the universe!" (Bhadavat Gita, 10:15)

Mankind here is portrayed as an embodiment of the divine attributes. In the art of language, there is perhaps no better way than metaphors to flirt with the soul. The ambiguity in figures of speech has been the source of much controversy and confusion, but what timeless source of delight and wisdom to the few who understand!◆

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Question & Answer sessions, by Hadhrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad

# An interview with Frank Levy

**The Muslim Sunrise interviews noteworthy personalities from the U.S. and abroad, to learn about their background, beliefs and contribution to society. In this issue, we sat with Frank Levy, Director of Development and Outreach for Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston.**



Frank Levy speaking at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's Religious Founders Day last year in Houston, Texas.

## Please tell the readers of the Muslim Sunrise about your background.

I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. I received my BS in Education from Mundelein College and my MA in History from the University of Illinois. I also have a Master of Fine Arts from The Goodman Theatre. I am married. My wife JoBeth converted to Judaism after we had been married 12 years. I have two sons and two daughters, and three granddaughters.

## Please tell us about your faith.

I'm Jewish and a member of Congregation Beth El (House of God) in Missouri City, Texas, which is a suburb of Houston, where I'm the

immediate past-president of the board of trustees and teach 7<sup>th</sup> grade religious school. While I am not a rabbi, I am a student of Judaism's sacred writings, the Torah and Talmud, and the writings of our great ancient and modern rabbis in both formal and informal educational programs.

## Can you tell our readers about your professional life?

I'm the Director of Development and Outreach for Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston.

Interfaith Ministries brings people of diverse faith traditions together for dialogue, collaboration and service. It envisions a community of faith working and acting together in response to the divine call to create a more just, compassionate, and caring society.

## What are your personal interests, hobbies, and the like?

On the serious side I find that my daily study and prayer centers my life and reminds me of my connection to the Holy One and to all of creation and all of God's children. This is a most important and fulfilling part of each day.

On the lighter side, I'm a long distance runner and bicyclist. I enjoy the solitude and time away from the phones and demands of daily life that running and cycling gives me. I like the challenge of seeing what limits I can challenge and surpass. I recently completed my first 50km trail run.

I'm also an action movie fanatic. The more car chases and car crashes the better. While I don't much like the violence, I really love the escapist nature of action films. I also like easy to read spy or detective novels. Again the escapist nature of these books is a good counter to my demanding job.

Probably the most rewarding activity I do each week is teaching 12 and 13-year-old students in our synagogue's religious school. This is the year they become bar or Bar Mitzvah – Sons or Daughters of the faith. It is Judaism's coming of age ritual. I enjoy teaching the tenets of our faith and helping young people to see how they can live a Jewish and God-centered life in a Christian world, and a world that seduces them toward living a life focused on money and society's false idols – cars, clothes, homes, music, etc.

## How did you first come in to contact with the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community?

Because of the nature of my job I have the opportunity to attend many lectures and events on the subject of God's place in the world, on tolerance and interfaith dialogue. It was at one of these events, sponsored by Interfaith Ministries partner, the Boniuk Center for the Study and Advancement of Religious Tolerance, that I met Dr. Amir Malik the President of the Ahmadiyya Community in Houston and Shahed Qureshi. We seemed to have an almost immediate connection on a spiritual level and began sharing phone calls and conversations over the next few months. This led to my invitation to speak at the 2005 Religious Founders Day event in Houston.

## **And so our readers are aware, each year, in cities all around the world the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community holds Religious Founders Day symposiums to create religious harmony through addresses and discussion. Tell us a little about Houston's event in 2005.**

The event, which was held in November, was wonderful and very enlightening. There were 6 speakers from a variety of religious traditions, including all three Abrahamic traditions – Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

While each speaker approached the topic of 'Man's purpose on earth and how to achieve it' differently, we all seemed to agree, in general, that our purpose is to serve the will of God, to care for the planet, and to make the world a more just and compassionate place for all people.

## **You said earlier you worked for Interfaith Ministries. Describe the kind of work Interfaith Ministries does.**

Interfaith Ministries is an amazing organization. I have been blessed by the Holy One to have the opportunity to work among a dedicated group of people who are focused on making the world a better place.

Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston is Houston's oldest interfaith organization and was founded in 1955. A few of our programs are: *Meals on Wheels*, which feeds over 3,000 homebound and hungry senior citizens in Houston each weekday; *Refugee Resettlement Services*, which annually resettles about 250 refugees, who've been forced from their homeland because of religious, ethnic, racial or political persecution; and *Faith Tours*, a city-wide educational tour to houses of worship of Houston's major faith traditions – Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, B'hai, and so on.

## **IM also played a role in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, right?**

Yes, our Office of Disaster Preparedness and Response works through faith communities to prepare the Houston community to respond to natural and man-made disasters and to coordinate a community wide volunteer effort to meet the community's needs in the aftermath of a disaster. IM was

instrumental in calling on, and organizing the Houston community's response to the needs of tens of thousands of evacuees from New Orleans that came to Houston in the wake of Hurricane Katrina in 2005. In specific, IM organized the feeding and spearheaded the fundraising effort needed to feed the thousands of people in the George R. Brown Convention Center in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Our Neighbors to Neighbors program, created in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, continues to help evacuees from New Orleans, living in Houston, integrate into the Houston community, with job and housing, clothing and furniture assistance, and medical, mental health and other community service referrals.

## **As the Director of Development and Outreach, what is your role in Interfaith Ministries?**

As Director of Development and Outreach it is my job to create, develop and retain relationships with faith communities, congregations, individuals and corporations, and to provide opportunities for these groups and individuals to take part in IM programs. It's my responsibility to create programs which will encourage the community to support IM with volunteers and financial gifts. IM has an approximately \$8 million budget. Financial support comes from governmental agencies such as the Area Agency on Aging for Meals on Wheels, United Way, congregations and faith communities, individuals and corporations. Beyond AAA and United Way, IM must raise approximately \$2 million per year to fulfill our mission of serving the community.

## **Being that our present issue concerns God in world religions, can you please tell us the name(s) of God in Judaism?**

In Judaism God has many names. Torah, which are the sacred teachings revealed to Moses our Teacher on Mount Sinai, recalls 70 names of God. Most often God is referred to as Adonai, or Elohai, referring to God's compassionate nature or God's judging nature. Of God's 70 names most refer to attributes of God's nature or God's role as Father, King, Shield of Abraham and Protector of Sarah, Creator or Rock and Redeemer, etc. Some very traditional or observant Jews may choose never to utter any of God's names, rather speaking only HaShem meaning The Name, as a sign of ultimate humility and reverence.

## **What is the role of God in Judaism and what is God's relationship with mankind?**

In Judaism Adonai/God is creator, father, sovereign, judge, protector and law giver. It is through Torah and the Mitzvot – which are the 613 commandments that inform Jewish behavior and a Jew's relationship with God, humanity, and the world –

It is our duty, and some might say choice, to do whatever is in our power to fulfill the mitzvot as a sign of our love, reverence and fear of God.

Judaism also teaches that humanity is God's partner in completing creation. Torah teaches that on the sixth day of creation God rested. Creation was not complete, Torah teaches that God created humans as a partner in completing creation, caring for the world and in tikkun olam – repairing the world.

## **Is there a concept of the hereafter in the Jewish faith?**

While there is a concept of an after life it is not as clearly defined as it is in Islam or Christianity. Called the World to Come it refers

*I have always been struck by the similarities between Islam – its laws, beliefs and traditions – and Judaism – its laws, beliefs and traditions.*

both to the afterlife and the Messianic era when all of mankind lives together in peace and in fulfillment of God's commandments and promise. Judaism is focused on how each of us lives our life here on earth as God's partner in creating a world of justice, compassion and caring. To quote the prophet Micah, All God demands of you is to *Seek Justice Love Mercy and walk humbly with God.*

While most readers may know that the Prophet Moses' <sup>as</sup> ancestry ties back to the Prophet Abraham <sup>as</sup>, they may not know that through Prophet Abraham <sup>as</sup>, Prophet Moses <sup>as</sup> and Prophet Muhammad <sup>sa</sup> share a common lineage. Do you see any similarities between the Islamic and Mosaic laws, languages and cultures?

I have always been struck by the similarities between Islam – its laws, beliefs and traditions – and Judaism – its laws, beliefs and traditions. Probably one of the significant *differences* is that Judaism sees Abraham as the first Jew and is often referred to as Abraham Aveinu – Abraham our Father. But one cannot ignore that both the Quran and Torah teach about God's testing of

Abraham as an example of how to deal with the daily tests we all face in life.

As cultures we both reflect our Semitic ancestry. We both share an ancestry as desert nomads and tribal peoples. Our languages and many customs are similar – halal and the kosher laws are very similar – we do not eat pork, shellfish, or scavenger foul.

**We would like to thank you for the good works you are doing and also for sitting with the *Muslim Sunrise* and hope to see your continued participation at our interfaith events. Is there anything more you'd like to share with our readership?**

Thank you for inviting me to take part in this interview. I have enjoyed it. Thank you to the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community of Houston for reaching out to all of the Houston community and inviting us to share in your efforts to make Houston a more compassionate and caring community. And thank you for sharing with us, and for living your faith in ways that make a better and more peaceful world.

Probably at no other time in the history of the world is it more important that people of faith and goodwill speak out and work together to make this world a better more peaceful world. In my opinion it is the responsibility of people of faith and goodwill to work toward a world where our shared beliefs of care for the less fortunate – the orphan, the widow, the homeless, the poor, and the stranger drive us to end hunger and poverty. It is also our responsibility, as an expression of our shared beliefs, to reach out to one another, and together, work toward a world of peace, justice, tolerance and understanding. For if we do not, those who would use faith as a destructive force will destroy us all.

Shalom Aleichem – peace and blessings to you and to your families.♦

*Frank Levy is the Director for Development and Outreach with Interfaith Ministries for Greater Houston, Inc. and can be reached at [flevy@imgh.org](mailto:flevy@imgh.org).*

Editor's Note: The terms *Semite* and *Semitic* are derived from *Shem*, the eldest son of Prophet Noah<sup>as</sup> and the progenitor of the Semitic people. It is from this common ancestry, dating back some 5,500 years, that the faith traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam have originated (*A Book of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Waheed Ahmad, p. 85).

## The Holy Quran

### Chapter 2: Al-Baqarah

#### Verse: 126

*And remember the time when We made the House a resort for mankind and a place of security; We said, 'Take ye the station of Abraham as a place of prayer.' And we commanded Abraham and Ishmael, saying, 'Purify My House for those who perform the circuit and for those who remain therein for devotion and those who bow down and fall prostrate in Prayer.'*

#### Verse : 134

*Were you present when death came to Jacob, when he said to his sons. 'What will you worship after me?' They answered, 'We will worship thy God, the God of thy fathers, Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, the One God; and to Him we submit ourselves.'*

#### Verse : 137

*Say ye, 'We believe in Allah and what has been revealed to us, and what was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob and his children, and what was given to Moses and Jesus, and what was given to all other Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them; and to Him we submit ourselves.'*

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- Community Development: *Water for Life*

# Muslim Terror: The Two Faces Of Islam

An Internet article by Sam Schlorff of Arab World Ministries, published by the Christian Broadcasting Network

Ever since the barbaric attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, we have received numerous inquiries from people trying to understand Islamic terrorism: What is there in Islam that would lead someone to commit such atrocities? Does orthodox Islam sanction such heinous acts? Or are they the aberration of a few radical Muslims? How can a suicidal terrorist who takes the lives of thousands of innocent victims be considered a good Muslim? How should we as Christians respond to the present situation in the light of these insights? Such are the kinds of questions Christians are asking.

I can understand that Muslims in America, to try to assuage the fears—and the animosity—of the public, have been speaking out in an effort to distance themselves from those who perpetrate such crimes. In recent days, there have been news items and interviews with Muslims on this topic in the local newspaper, or on TV, all affirming that “Islam does not teach or approve such actions.” We are told that “Islam means ‘Peace,’ and is a religion of peace,” or that “taking one’s own life is not Islamic and is disapproved.”

I can also understand that our government feels a need to make a sharp distinction between Islam and Islamic terrorists, as the President has done in his speeches to the nation. Many of our citizens, as well as many not-yet-citizens in our workforce, are Muslims, and we cannot afford to build a wall of alienation between these and other citizens.

And we need to speak out and act decisively against all forms of vigilantism that lash out at any who look like they could be Arabs or Muslims. What’s more, the government needs desperately to maintain peaceful relations with the some 40 Muslim-majority nations of the world, and to obtain the support of as many as possible in the war against terrorism. We must work with them, not against them, if we are to make any headway.

## Two Sides to Islam

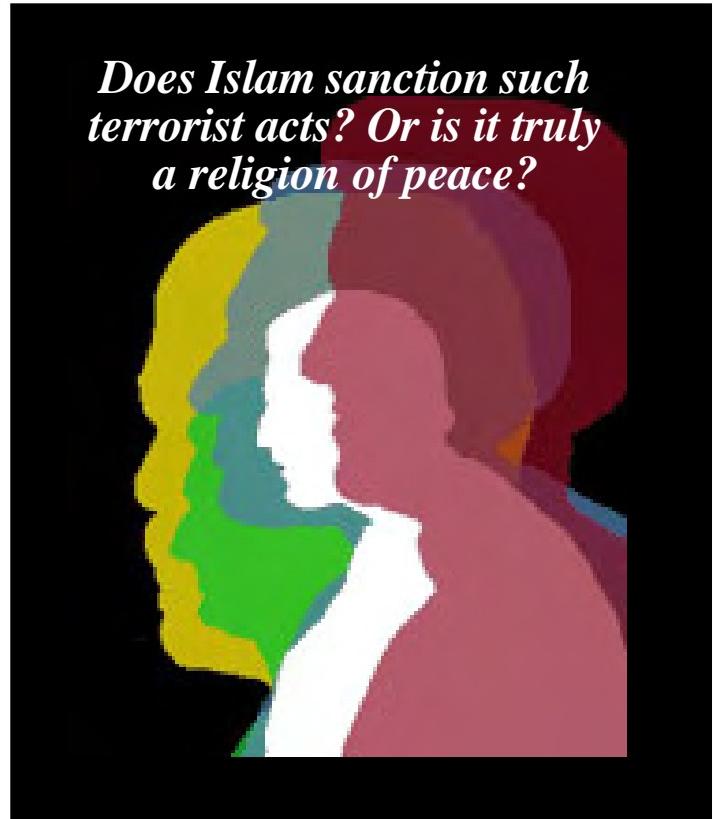
But where does the truth lie? Does Islam sanction such terrorist acts? Or is it truly a religion of peace? *That* is the question. The answer, however, is not so simple. The truth is that both tendencies exist in Islam—in conflict with each other. There are two sides to Islam so to speak, two faces.

On the one hand there is normative Islam, with which you may be more or less familiar. To a majority of Muslims this is what Islam is all about. It involves them in believing in the six articles of Islamic faith and practicing the five required “Acts of Worship” – from the five ritual prayers that are performed daily, to the month-long fast of Ramadan, to the pilgrimage made to Mecca at least once in a lifetime, and so on. Between seeking to fulfill these and other duties imposed on them by Islamic Law, participating in various Islamic festivals, and trying to put food on the table, the average Muslim would seem to have little time for much else.

This is the only Islam that most Muslims in this country know. I’m told that 42 percent of U.S. Muslims are native born (of which the vast majority is African American), and the remainder are immigrants who have come here to find work, get an education, or escape oppression. But there are those who *do* know the other side of Islam, but do not want to acknowledge it, or what is worse, do not want the truth to be known.

The truth is that there is another side to Islam, a side that embraces violence “in the way of Allah.” As has often been said, Islam divides the

*Does Islam sanction such terrorist acts? Or is it truly a religion of peace?*



world into two zones, Dar as-Salaam (“House of Peace”), and Dar al-Harb (“House of War”). Islam is not just a religion, as I have written elsewhere; it is an ideology with a political agenda.\* It holds that all men are created to live in submission to Allah, as prescribed by Islamic law.

Muslims believe that Islam’s destiny is to extend its control until the whole Dar al-Harb is subject to Islamic law in an Islamic state, and this includes the use of force. The word “Islam” does NOT mean “peace.” It is related to the Arabic word for peace (salaam), but it means “to surrender, to submit, to make peace by laying down one’s arms in submission.” It has a militaristic connotation. Herein lie the origins of radical Islam.

## Violence a Historic Element in Islam

It is a fact that killing, violence and terrorism have always been part and parcel of Islam. This even includes giving one’s life to advance the cause of Islam. In saying this I do not mean to imply that such acts have always and uniformly been practiced throughout history, at least to the extent of the barbarity seen on Sept. 11.

In our modern world, at any rate, most Islamic nations try to live at peace with other nations and have taken a position against violence and terrorism, but these have been present to a greater or lesser degree from the very beginning of Islam. In a word, one cannot make as hard and fast a distinction between *normative Islam* and *radical Islam* as some would like.

One can readily find passages in the Qur'an that exhort the faithful to fight and kill the "unbelievers," that is, to wage *Jihad* (Holy War). Consider, for example, Sura 2:190-191a: "Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors. And slay them wherever ye find them, and drive them out of the places whence they drove you out, for persecution is worse than slaughter. ..." (See also 2:216-218; 8:38-41; 9:5-6 & 29 etc.).

### Prophet Killed Others

Other verses promise the *shahid* (martyr), who gives his life "in the way of Allah," the forgiveness of sins and direct entry into Paradise. Take Sura 3:195b: "So those who fled and were driven forth from their homes and suffered damage for My cause, and fought and were slain, verily I shall remit their evil deeds from them and verily I shall bring them into Gardens underneath which rivers flow—A reward from Allah. ..." (See also 3:169; 4:74-77 & 100; 22:58, etc.) And then there is the example of the Prophet himself who, as has been recorded in the *Hadith* (Islamic tradition), did not hesitate to have his opponents and critics killed.\*\*

One will of course find many apologists who condemn acts of violence. Claiming that Islam has only been extended by peaceful means, they maintain that Muslims fight only in "self-defense," as the verse cited above seems to indicate. It is amazing, however, how far "self-defense" can be stretched.

Ossama bin Laden was recently reported as saying, "The terrorism we practice is of the commendable kind for it is directed at the tyrants and the aggressors and the enemies of Allah." (Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 23, 2001, page D4). For such militants, it is sufficient for a Mulla or radical Muslim party to pronounce a person or a country an "enemy of Allah" to justify killing. Consider what happened to President Anwar al-Sadat of Egypt! He was assassinated by a fundamentalist group in Egypt as an "enemy of Islam" because he made peace with Israel.

### Islam at War With Itself

One could say that Islam is at war with itself.\*\*\* On the one side are the "moderate" Muslim governments that are trying to run a modern ship of state within the family of nations, more or less within the framework of *normative Islam*. Nearly all have Islam as the "religion of state" in their constitutions.

On the other side are a number of radical Muslim movements, usually on the outs with their own governments, which are usually headed by radical Mullas. These teach that the Muslims are in trouble because they have forsaken true Islam and that the solution is to return to pure Islam. To these movements, "the enemy" is mainly the West, especially the U.S. (the "Great Satan"), but also the "moderate" (to us) governments of the Muslim World.

One such movement is the Taliban who have succeeded in gaining control of most of Afghanistan. For the most part, however, these radical movements operate clandestinely (e.g. the GIA in Algeria, the Islamic Jihad in Egypt, and so on). Some have front organizations in the West, and at least one, outlawed in Syria, has established a base in England from

which to propagandize for a return to the Caliphate, a single Islamic government that rules over the whole Muslim world—and eventually over the entire world!

### Radical Islam Gaining Ground

Between the Muslim governments of the world and the radical Muslim movements are the rank and file of Muslims who try to live their lives in accordance with Islam as best they can, but often they are the ones to suffer the most. But make no mistake. Radical Islam has been gaining ground for a number of years for various reasons, and the more moderate governments, more or less friendly to the West, have their backs to the wall so to speak.

As North American Christians, what then should be our response to the present situation? First of all pray. Pray that our government and its partners act wisely in the war against terrorism; pray that the actions taken do not anger the masses more and precipitate a rush to the side of radical Islam. Pray also for the terrorists around the world who have been duped into thinking that if they become "martyrs" through such acts they go straight to Paradise. Have you ever thought about what awaits them on the other side? Do we dare to pray that God would call someone to go to such people with the love of Christ?



### Friendship

We should also be reaching out in friendship to the Middle Easterners, Asians and other aliens in our midst, whether Muslim or otherwise. And we should speak out against every form of harassment or violence perpetrated against them simply because they are Muslim, or look like they could be Muslim.

If you know of a Muslim or Arab family, go to them or give them a call to find out how they are doing. (A majority of Arabs in the U.S. are Christians, but they too are harassed because of their looks.) Show concern for their well being, and stand with or for them as needed.

In this connection, Christians need to become much more informed about Islam, especially Islam in North America. Get your church to hold workshops or seminars on the subject. Some should consider attending a more extensive or intensive program, such as AWM's Summer Institute on Islam (held in Philadelphia every first week of June), or similar program offered elsewhere in the country.

### Churches Must Get Involved

In a word, the churches of North America should begin to become much more active one way or another in outreach to the Muslims in our midst. They are everywhere, especially in urban settings, an estimated 6 million of them. Outreach ministries to Muslims have been launched in a number of cities, and they are doing an excellent job.

But the vast number of churches have been content to leave these specialized individuals or ministries do the job, while they remain uninvolved. We need to see each church involved in some way in outreach to the Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, and Buddhists in our midst. Several churches may need to partner together to put together an outreach team. But let's get on with it. We have a job to do.♦

# A Response to “Two Faces of Islam”

*The Holy Quran clearly and unequivocally declares that all life is sacred, and to unjustly take the life of a single person is wrong. The Holy Quran also proclaims that there is “no compulsion in religion” (2:257) and admonishes Muslims from injuring the sensibilities of other faiths.*

Dear Mr. Schlorff,

The article titled “The Two Faces of Islam” — posted on the Christian Broadcasting Network website — has been read with great interest by members of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

Undeniably, as you have described, a small radical element among the Muslim community embraces violence as a means to achieve their objectives. This radical element frequently employs a distorted interpretation and presentation of Islam to attract followers, usually the young, unemployed and alienated who are willing to take innocent lives to further their personal, political, or distorted religious goals.

Fundamentally, any people who take innocent lives, regardless of religious affiliation or perceived cause, are humanity’s enemy, and in reality, suffer from some psychological disease. All right thinking people of all faiths should band together to put an end to violence and indiscriminate killings by any group for any cause.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA applauds your call to work together and to reach out in friendship. Headed by Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has repeatedly denounced violence and terrorism of all types, particularly those reprehensible acts committed in the name of religion.

The founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> (1835-1908), who was divinely inspired to lead a renaissance of Islam by returning to the pure Islam practiced by the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, unequivocally and forcefully denounced any violent conception of Jihad in Islam in today’s world.

Further, Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> also corrected the misunderstandings amongst Muslims concerning the application of Jihad during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>.

If, however, cooperation and dialog are truly your objectives, then we feel compelled to draw your attention to portions of your article where

you wrongly attribute the violence practiced by some Muslims to the teachings of the Holy Quran and the practice of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (upon whom be peace).

It is difficult to imagine that you strive for cooperation on one hand, yet you malign the teachings of Holy Quran and the pure character of the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> – the fundamental fabrics of a Muslim’s faith – with the other.

Specifically, you write: “One can readily find the passages in the Quran that exhort the faithful to fight and kill the unbelievers”. And further: “and then there is the example of the Prophet himself who as has been recorded in the Hadith, did not hesitate to have his opponents and critics killed.”

The Holy Quran clearly and unequivocally declares that all life is sacred, and to unjustly take the life of a single person is wrong. The Holy Quran also proclaims that there is “no compulsion in religion” (2:257) and admonishes Muslims from injuring the sensibilities of other faiths.

The injunctions concerning Jihad in the Holy Quran and the Hadith are clear in several aspects. The greatest Jihad as described in the Holy Quran and Hadith is the struggle to purify one’s soul and to achieve a spiritual revolution by means of the Holy Quran (25:53, 29:70). The act of Jihad that involves a physical struggle is termed the lesser Jihad in the Hadith.

This physical Jihad is allowed only under very strict conditions: a Muslim is attacked offensively and forced from his home and prevented from practicing his faith for the sole reason that he declares himself to be a Muslim (22:40-41, 60:10). These conditions did exist in the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> and his response was strictly in accordance with the injunctions of the Holy Quran. Solely because they had accepted the monotheistic faith of Prophet Abraham<sup>as</sup>, Muslims endured thirteen years of physical persecution – which included armed attacks by Meccan clans and forced exile to Abyssinia and Medina.

In such dire conditions, Muslims were finally allowed to fight back for their literal survival. Any call for armed Jihad that does not meet the conditions set forth in the Holy Quran and as practiced by the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> is false. It is in this light that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad<sup>as</sup> declared over a hundred years ago – and that his followers continue to declare today — that there is no justification for armed Jihad in Islam because the narrow conditions for its existence do not exist today. Muslims are freely allowed to practise their faith throughout the world.

Any verse in the Holy Quran that call for actions against “unbelievers” has to be understood in its historical context. The Holy Quran was revealed on a daily basis to address the needs of the Muslims of the time as well as to provide the basis of guidance for future Muslims. Those verses that speak to specific actions against others were based upon the conditions of the time and in response to actions taken against a small and fledgling community of monotheists living among an aggressive and violent group of idol worshippers. The very verses referenced in your article (2:190-191) make it clear that fighting was only allowed as a defensive action against an aggressor.

Never does the Holy Quran sanction unprovoked and indiscriminate violence. Using the few verses referenced in your article in the wrong context and not viewed in their proper historical perspective as an indictment against Islam is unjust and improper.

One can do a similar injustice with Biblical verses that are taken out of

context. For example, according to the Bible, Moses<sup>as</sup> was commanded to forcefully take the land of Canaan (Deuteronomy 20:1-20). It could be argued that Christians and Jews therefore believe it is lawful to forcefully wage war and take the land and possessions of those who do not share their beliefs.

The commandments to the Prophet Moses<sup>as</sup> were for a specific reason and under a specific condition, just as the authorization for self-defense given to the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> was done under specific conditions. Offensive warfare or the attack of innocent people is contrary to the overwhelming message of love and forgiveness in the Holy Bible, just as it is contrary to overwhelming message of mercy and love in the Holy Quran. In both cases to infer that these scriptures advocate violence would be a distortion of a sacred religious scripture that a fair person would not advocate.

One does not have to rely upon theological debate, however, to determine the true nature and teachings of Islam. One need only look at the example of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> and of the overwhelming majority of faithful Muslims past and present. If it is truly a teaching of Islam to indiscriminately kill unbelievers and that Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> “did not hesitate to have his critics killed,” then how can it be that the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> administered local authority over a diverse ethnic and religious community in Medina? In fact, he was requested to come to Medina and become their leader because he was well known for his honesty and fair play. When the Muslims finally defeated the Meccans, the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> decreed that all those who had raised arms against the Muslims were forgiven.

This, of course, did not require conversion to Islam. Only a very few Meccans who had committed serious atrocities (war crimes) were punished. If it were truly a tenet of Islam to kill unbelievers then no one would have been spared. After the death of the Holy Prophet<sup>sa</sup> the Islamic empire expanded in all directions. History is full of examples of Muslim rule of law in Africa, Asia and Europe where all religions were respected, the property of all was protected, and no forced conversions occurred. Muslim governments even used public finance to build and repair churches. Where there have been a few recorded instances that may contradict the above theme, those instances past and present are an aberration or abdication of Islamic teachings by a few distorted individuals.

As a final illustration of the true nature and impact of Islam, we quote the author and historian H.G. Wells in his work *Outline of History* (pg. 610). Even though Mr. Wells is a critic of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup>, in reference to the final sermon given by Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> during his last pilgrimage to Mecca, he admits the following: “In the year before his (Muhammad) death .... He made a great sermon to his people .... They may not be sublime words, as certain utterances of Jesus<sup>as</sup> of Nazareth are sublime, but they established in the world a great tradition of dignified fair dealing, they breathe a spirit of generosity, and they are human and workable. They created a society more free from widespread cruelty and social oppression than any society had ever been in the world before.” We simply ask: can this be the impact of a man and religion truly rooted in violence?

In closing, we ask that if you truly desire to reach out to Muslims and cooperate together against the violence of the radical elements, then please refrain from maligning the character of the Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> and distorting the true teachings of the Holy Quran. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA stands ready to work with you in any activity that is good and constructive as we continue our own efforts to combat violence in Islam by clarifying Islam’s true teachings.♦

**Note:** The above response was prepared by Martin R. Ahmad. A member of the Central Response Committee of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, USA. To our readers, we welcome articles written against Islam, so we can prepare a proper response. -- F.D. Shams, Chairman of the Central Response Committee.

“

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”

Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw):

*On the Day of Judgment Allah, the Exalted, will call:  
Where are those who loved each other to My glory?  
Today I shall give them shelter in the shade of My  
mercy. Today there is no shade beside My shade.* (Muslim)

*By Him in Whose hands is my life, you will not enter  
Paradise unless you believe, and you will not truly  
believe unless you love one another. Shall I tell you  
something whereby you will love one another? Multiply  
the greeting of peace among yourselves.* (Muslim).|

From the Promised Messiah's Writings:

*Our God is our paradise. Our highest delight is in our God for we have seen Him and have found every beauty in Him. This wealth is worth procuring though one might have to lay down one's life to procure it. This ruby is worth purchasing though one may have to lose oneself to acquire it. Oh ye, who are bereft, run to this fountain and it will satisfy you. It is the fountain of life that will save you. What shall I do, and how shall I impress the hearts with this good news, and by beating what drum shall I make the announcement that this is our God, so that people might hear? What remedy shall I apply to the ears of the people so that they should listen?*

(Kashti Nooh, p. 19-20)

*The God of Islam is the same God who is visible in the mirror of the law of nature and is discernible in the book of nature. Islam has not presented a new God but has presented the same God who is presented by the light of man's heart, by the conscience of man, and by heaven and earth.*

(Tableegh-e-Risalat, Vol. VI, p. 15)

# Prayer in Islam: Is it really that different?

By Naser Shams

Throughout history, Muslims have been recognized by their routine five daily prayers. Prayer has become so deeply woven into the identity of Muslims that one hardly sees a portrayal of Muslims in the media unless they are engaged in some ritualistic postures facing Makkah. However, the nature of Islamic prayer is no different than those forms of worship that came before Islam. These are universal acts of humility and obedience that we see in all religions today. In fact, we see traces of Islamic worship, from beginning to end, documented throughout the Bible, which makes us question – Is it really that different?

When Muslims enter the mosque, the first thing they do is remove their shoes. This is performed to preserve the sanctity and cleanliness of God's house of worship. In the Bible, we see God commanding Moses<sup>as</sup> to do the same:

*And he said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground (Exodus 3:5)*



Similarly, we find that Joshua did the same:

*And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy, And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5:15)*

The next thing Muslims do is a ritualistic washing of the hands, face, arms, and feet. In Arabic, this is called *wudhu*. We see this practice in the Bible as well:

*So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not; and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations. (Exodus 30:21)*

We find that the above commandment was put in practice by Moses<sup>as</sup> and his brother, Aaron:



*And Moses and Aaron and his sons washed their hands and their feet thereat; When they went into the tent of the congregation, and when they came near unto the altar, they washed; as the Lord commanded Moses (Exodus 40:31-32)*

It is also recorded that David<sup>as</sup> did the same:

*Then David arose from the earth, and washed, and anointed himself, and changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshipped; ....(II Samuel 12:20)*

A third characteristic of Muslim worship involves covering ones head. This is a gesture of respect and humility as one stands before God. This tradition is also seen in the Bible:

*And David went up by the ascent of mount Olivet, and wept as he went up, and had his head covered, and he went barefoot; and all the people that was with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up....where he worshipped God... (II Samuel 15:30 to 32)*

The Bible holds a more emphatic teaching when it comes to women covering their hair during worship:

*But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.*

*For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.*

*(I Corinthians 11:5 -6)*

Here Paul states in the Bible that a woman who prays without covering her head dishonors her head. He even goes to the extent of saying that if she fails to cover her head, it is a shame equal to her hair being shaven off. Early Christian authorities who promoted this belief include Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150-215); Tertullian (c. AD 160-225); Hippolytus (d. AD 236); Chrysostom (c. AD 344-407); Jerome (c. AD 345-420); and Augustine (AD 354-430). Although many Christians today are divided on this custom, it was widespread decades ago and is still practiced by puritanical sects such as the Amish and Mennonites, as well as orders of nuns.

Muslims begin their prayer by standing in rows facing towards the *kiblah*, which points to the city of Makkah. Makkah holds a high degree of sanctity in Islam as it is considered the place where the first house of worship was built. This house of worship is called the *Ka'ba* and it houses the black stone. The Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> had stated that the black stone was shining and sparkling white but was blackened once it landed upon the Earth. This suggests that the black stone possibly originated as a meteor which burned up as it entered the Earth's atmosphere, marking where the House of God should be built.

In Judeo-Christian tradition, the lands of Israel, particularly Jerusalem, hold a high degree of sanctity. In the same way Muslims revere

*Muslim prayers involve a number of different postures. These include standing, bowing, kneeling, and prostrating with one's face upon the ground. All of these postures are expressions of humility, designed to nurture spiritual growth.*



Mecca as the city they face when they pray, Jews hold Jerusalem with such sanctity:

*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (Daniel 6:10)*

Muslim prayers involve a number of different postures. These include standing, bowing, kneeling, and prostrating with one's face upon the ground. All of these postures are expressions of humility, designed to nurture spiritual growth. Such expressions of worship are commonly seen throughout the Bible. Although there are numerous references in the Bible, the following eight quotes establish a strong resemblance between Biblical and Islamic descriptions of worship:

*And it came to pass, Abraham's servant heard their words, he worshipped the Lord, bowing himself to the earth (Genesis 24:52)*

*And the people believed; and when they heard that the Lord had visited the children of Israel, and that he had looked upon their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshipped. (Exodus 4:31)*

*And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped. (Exodus 34:8)*

*And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship and said unto him, What saith my lord unto his servant? (Joshua 5:14)*

*And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the Lord, he arose from before the altar of the Lord, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. (I Kings 8:54)*

*...they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever (II Chronicles 7:3)*

*And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the Lord, worshipping the Lord. (II Chronicles 20:18)*

*And he (Jesus) went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. (Matthew 26:39)*

Most importantly, the Islamic form of worship is far more than ritualistic postures. It is designed to establish a living relationship with God, both as a community and as an individual. Muslims are encouraged to pray in congregation. This fosters harmony among believers. There is no distinction between rich and poor, black and white, or the famous and unknown. All are equal before God except those who excel in righteousness. The believers line up in rows and stand shoulder-to-shoulder, fully aware that they are standing before God. There are also individual prayers where the believers break off and pray at their own pace – asking God for the remedies they desire in their personal lives.

It is in establishing this relationship with God that one finds success and happiness. All other pursuits in life are passing fancies that afford temporary pleasures. However, as the God mentioned in the Quran is a Universal Being, He grants no one group monopolistic rights to Him. It is also His responsibility to teach all people the ways He would like them to approach Him. This is the very reason the forms and methods of prayer are so similar across all the various Faiths – because this Universal God, Allah, is the Source of all of these teachings.♦

# The Attribute of As-Salaam

Naeem Ahmad, Long Island, NY

**The interrelation of all these beautiful names in this verse is highly significant in that all support and are in turn supported by As-Salaam. To be a source of peace, He must be an absolute sovereign with control over everything, He must Himself be free from all defects, He Himself be not subject to any kind of danger, be aware of His creation's needs and be himself free from all such needs. God is the source of all security, that is to say He is Himself secure from all defects and misfortunes and hardships, and bestows security on His creation, for if He is subject to misfortune – for instance had He been subject to being killed by people or being frustrated in His designs - how would anyone's heart feel secure that God would save them from misfortune?**

*A study of the most beautiful names or attributes of God is necessary for advancement on the spiritual path, as the main cause of falling in error and sinfulness is an imperfect knowledge of God and His attributes. As-Salaam is one of the most beautiful names of Allah. It occurs in the singular only once in the Holy Qur'an in Sura Al-Hashr:*

He is Allah, except whom none is worthy of worship and obedience. He is Al-Malik, the absolute sovereign with control over His creation and existence of all things. Al-Quddus, who is free from all defects that can be imagined or flaws that can be observed or imperfections that can be reasonably assumed to exist or any lack of compassion that can be felt by a discerning heart. As-Salaam, free from all evil, the bestower of peace. Al-Momin, the bestower of security. Al-Muhaimin, cognizant of all and guarding all. Al-Aziz, unique, mighty, having power over everything. Al-Jabbar: He who sets things right, who makes it possible for us to put our life back together. Al-Mutakabber, free from all defects of created beings, high above all kinds of association with all manner of earthly or heavenly creatures<sup>1</sup>. (59:24)

The interrelation of all these beautiful names in this verse is highly significant in that all support and are in turn supported by As-Salaam. To be a source of peace, He must be an absolute sovereign with control over everything, He must Himself be free from all defects, be Himself be not subject to any kind of danger, be aware of His creation's needs and be himself free from all such needs. God is the source of all security, that is to say He is Himself secure from all defects and misfortunes and hardships, and bestows security on His creation, for if He is subject to misfortune – for instance had He been subject to being killed by people or being frustrated in His designs - how would anyone's heart feel secure that God would save them from misfortune?<sup>2</sup>

Salaam is derived from *salama*; it means safety, security, immunity or freedom from faults, defects, blemishes, imperfections and vices. It also means peace, obedience, heaven, and is one of the names of God.<sup>3</sup> It also means one who is persistent, uninterrupted unfaltering, unweakening, continuing to eternity. Allah is called *As-Salaam* in that He caused all creation to exist in peace and security by establishing order in the workings of the universe. All of His creations are safe from any oppression, excess or iniquitous action from Him.

Indeed, some lexicographers and



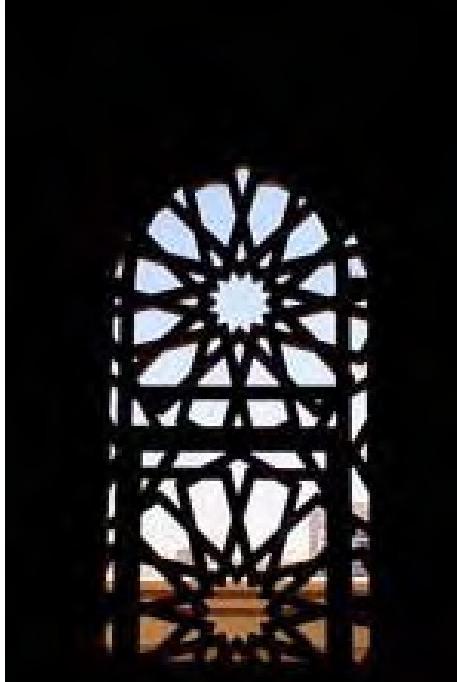
**Salaam, however, is much more than mere absence of danger. It is a dynamic, positive force that in addition to providing physical well being and environmental security, inspires us with tranquility, inner peace, a serenity of heart and mind that transcends our consciousness and enables us to deal with life with equanimity and resolve, and leads us to salvation.**

commentators of the Holy Qur'an say that no single word comes close to describing the full connotations of *salaam*. The nearest would be *salvation*. The truest sense emerges by examining the many contexts where this word has been used in the Holy Qur'an:

In Sura al-Maidah we read: *Allah guides with this (book) those who follow His good pleasure to the pathways of salaam, (peace, tranquility, safety)* (5:17). ‘Pathways’ is adopted here as a translation of “*Subul*” to make it distinct from ‘*Siraatt*,’ or a road or highway. Here, when the main road of God’s religion is not accessible or is obscured, or it is not expedient to follow it, Allah guides those who love and seek Him, through these back alleys, these underground railroads to safety and security.

The Holy Qur'an, the revealed scriptures and history are replete with examples of how the chosen servants of God were made safe and secure from all danger throughout the ages. He saved Noah, upon whom be peace, and bestowed His salaam on him. He saved Lot, upon whom be peace, and his family while He destroyed those around them. He bestowed His salaam on Moses, upon whom be peace, and the Israelites from the pursuing hosts of Pharaoh's army. It was As-Salaam who turned the trackers away from the mouth of the cave on Mount Thaur, while the Holy Prophet of Islam and his companion were hiding in it, and later it was He who put the awe of an overpowering reality on Suraqa bin Malik when he caught up with the Holy Prophet's party on horseback. Indeed, the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings of Allah be upon him, is replete with the manifestation of God's salaam to his person and to his mission.

In our times, the Imam of this age, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, upon whom be peace, was made safe and secure at every turn from the machination of his enemies. His books and the Ahmadiyya literature record his escapes and



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deliverance in miraculous ways from natural disasters, plagues, murderous attempts on his life and persecution by the state at the instigation of Christian missionaries. The lives of his successors, companions, and many devotees are full of instances of divine intervention for their safety, security and peace of mind.

The emigration from Pakistan of the late Hazrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, may Allah be merciful to him, the fourth successor to the Promised Messiah, is also notable. The dictatorial and rabidly anti Ahmadi regime of General Zia had issued orders of his arrest. The police and the intelligence agencies of the state had been mobilized to apprehend him, but God extended the umbrella of salaam to him, and he left Pakistan on a commercial flight without any untoward incidence. The essential fact is that he landed with salaam in England to continue with his mission and to raise the hopes and spirits, and indeed exponentially increase the numbers, of Ahmadi Muslims.

We read in Sura Ya Sin: Salaam (Peace) shall be the word from the most merciful Lord (36:59). In context, this particular salaam is the desirable state of the people who are already enjoying the shade and fruits and other unimaginable blessings of paradise. This brings out the point that while salaam from a human being is a wish or a prayer, the same from Allah is a command. A companion told the Promised Messiah that some non-Ahmadi Muslims do not return the Islamic greetings, Salaam - o- Alikum. He replied: What do you hope to gain from their salaam? The real salaam is the word from God. Once I was in an unbearable physical pain and fever, and I prayed fervently for relief. Presently I received a revelation ‘Salmun Alikum,’ and the pain and affliction disappeared instantly<sup>4</sup>.

Sura Al Anbiya tells of the story of Prophet Abraham, upon him be peace, when his people despaired to bring him back to their ways, and he would not desist from preaching the word of

the one true God to them. So they prepared a fire to throw him in it. Some say that the story is allegorical and the fire is that of persecution, hatred and enmity. The Holy Quran says: We said, O Fire, be thou a means of coolness and salaam(safety) for Ibrahim. (21:70). The As Salaam caused the fires to be cooled and granted his chosen servant inner peace and tranquility.

**A** historical reference to early Islam will further clarify the concept of As-Salaam. We read in Sura Anfal: And had He shown them to you as many, you, O believers, would surely have been demoralized and disputes with one another about the matter (of waging war); but Allah extended His salaam over (saved) you. Surely Allah has knowledge of what is in your hearts. And so, at the time of your encounter with them, He made them appear to you few in your eyes, and made you appear few in their eyes that Allah may bring about the thing that was decreed. And to Allah are all affairs returned. (8:44-45). The operative word here is sallama — that Allah provide His salaam. Here is a beautiful paradox: The Meccan army at Badar, numerically at least three times the strength of the nascent Muslim force, superior in weaponry and in mounts, and with battle hardened knights-at-arms is shown to the Muslims as few. They do not appear to be the formidable and daunting force that they are; and so the Muslims maintain their morale. To the Meccans, on the other hand, the Muslims appear the ragtag collection of date farmers and poor young men that they in fact are. The Meccans are thereby lulled into false confidence of an easy victory. The result is a rout of the Meccans. A great manifestation of Allah's salaam for the believers.

To grasp the full range of salaam, we may borrow an analogy from the mechanical world: Scientifically speaking, there is no such thing as cold - it is only absence of heat. Heat can be measured, added, removed and otherwise manipulated for comfort or other industrial purposes; but cold is only a minus reading on the thermometer. Similarly, safety is described as an absence of danger. Salaam, however, is much more than mere absence of danger. It is a dynamic, positive force that in addition to providing physical well being and environmental security, inspires us with tranquility, inner peace, a serenity of heart and mind that transcends our consciousness and enables us to deal with life with equanimity and resolve, and leads us to salvation.

**T**he most outstanding example in our times of the state of salaam and the lack of it may be found in the martyrdom of Sahibzada Abdul Latif Shaheed. After his return to his home in Kabul after visiting the Promised Messiah in Qadian in 1902, Sahibzada Sahib was

imprisoned by the religious authorities and encouraged by the rival's for the king's favor; he was persecuted for his beliefs. After an abortive debate and a sham trial, he was declared a heretic and sentenced to be stoned to death. The weak king, fearing religious riots, acquiesced. The Sahibzada was tortured and was dragged to the place of his execution by a rope through his nostrils. He was buried waist deep; ready to be put to death. His last words the Qur'anic prayer of Prophet Joseph, upon whom be peace: You alone are my patron in this world and the next. Let it be that I die in a state of salaam, in a state of submission to You as a Muslim, and let it be that I am joined with the righteous (12:102.)

There can be no doubt that he had lived and died in a state of salaam, just as there is no doubt that the state of salaam left that unfortunate country. There has been no safety for Afghanistan, no security for its people, no stability of its society, no growth of any positive endeavor, no improvement in education, literacy, child mortality and human development. The only measured increase is in poppy cultivation, earning for itself the dubious distinction of the world's largest heroin supplier. The people have suffered anarchy, civil war, occupation by the Soviets, repression by the warlords, oppression by the most misguided religious fanatics, the Taliban, exploitation by the terrorists and since the last few years, devastation by foreign powers in their campaign to root out terror. May Allah have mercy on that country and its people, and may they recognize the error of their ways and be rightly guided, Amen.

**A**s-Salaam is one of those names or attributes of Allah on which depend the whole system of nature's proper functioning. There is a well-known prayer of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, upon whom be peace and blessings of Allah: O our Lord, You are As Salaam: the Protector, the Guardian, all salaam - protection and safety and security - come from You and to You does this salaam, protection, return. O our Lord keep us alive with this salaam, protection. O our Lord most blessed art You, the Possessor of the highest grandeur and majesty and glory, Amen.

This prayer is a very complete and perfect prayer for the best functioning of human life. Allah is the only one who can give us protection, safety and immunity because He is Omnipotent, Omniscient and Omnipresent. Owing to His Omnipotence nothing can be out of His reach or beyond His power. Therefore, He can correct the wrongs and remedy the ills and straighten every possible mistake. He is Omniscient and, therefore, nothing is hidden from Him whether in the past, present or in the future. His knowledge encompasses every aspect of life whether it is related to time, place or actions.

His power encompasses every aspect of direction and guidance; therefore, if there is any mistake, or error or lapse, He is capable of correcting it in time so that a human being can be saved of its bad consequences and malevolent impact. He is Omnipresent; therefore, nothing anywhere in the universe is beyond His control and comprehension. He is capable of knowing whatever is happening anywhere and howsoever in any part of the universe.

**T**he Prophet Muhammad has taught this comprehensive prayer so that all Muslims may supplicate and ask their Lord to keep them always under the wings of His salaam, protection, safety, guardianship and guidance because He is the Master and Possessor of all these beautiful Names and attributes and He has the capability of doing whatever He wishes to do, and nobody and no thing can hinder Him or obstruct Him from doing whatever and however He wants to do it.

Every aspect of power, knowledge, direction and guidance comes from Him and, finally, as a result, returns to Him because He is As Salaam, the embodiment of peace, protection, guidance and safety. He can cause every aspect of life to be run and executed normally and properly. So through His blessings, mercy and benevolence He guides us in each and every aspect of our normal, proper and beneficial life. His Glory and Grandeur is above all and is the greatest so nothing can obstruct Him nor deter Him from doing what He wants to do.♦

Our Last word is: All praise belongs to Allah, the Lord Sustainer of all the worlds.

#### Notes:

- 1.Hazrat Maulavi Nooruddin RA Khalifatul Masih I: Haqaiq-ul Furqan Vol. 4
- 2.The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam
- 3.Lane: Arabic English Lexicon
- 4.Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad AS: Malfoozat Vol. 9

**The Holy Prophet  
Muhammad (saw) On  
Brotherhood**

***No one believes truly  
until he desires for his  
brother that which he  
desires for himself***

(Bokhari and Muslim)

# From The Archives “A Legacy”

## Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, Founder of The Muslim Sunrise

*I cannot claim to have done any great work, but I do hope, in the Grace of Allah, that in clearing the way for the future Missionaries of Islam I have done some pioneer work and sown the seed of Truth throughout the land which will grow up in time and show in big, tall, strong trees to feed and shelter thousands, and send out healthy vibrations to millions.*

The Muslim Sunrise has been in print since 1921. In western countries Muslims were referred to as Moslems and Mohammadens. Islam was commonly referred to as the Mohammadan faith. For most Americans who met Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, the Editor and Founder of The Muslim Sunrise, was the first Muslim they had ever met. The Muslim Sunrise is the first Muslim periodical published in the United States of America.

**W**itness to the Great Depression, World War II, and the Civil Rights Movement, the Muslim Sunrise has a rich and storied history. In this segment you will journey back in time to read excerpts from issues dating back to the 1920s.

### Some of my First Impressions

*Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq, Editor*

AMERICA is a mixture of nationalities, languages, races and colors. You will find here the best of them as well as the worst. It is a land of freedom, but freedom is being misused in some cases. Over in England I was used to seeing all the traffic go to the left; here, on landing I noticed everywhere written “Keep to the Right.” Sounds nice and right, and one begins to feel that this is the right land to lie in. The Americans are taller

and stouter than the English but not so quick. They do all their business on their extremely excellent telephone system but are slow in writing work.

Some parts of the states are much colder than England, but the Americans seem to know beforehand (while English do not) that they have to encounter the cold weather and therefore they provide for it in time. The houses are built to be well-heated with the heating provisions in the basement and very few are seen catching colds while in

England everybody seems to be sneezing and wiping his nose in winter. The wood framework houses are exquisite and electric lighting enhances their colored beauty. While in England they generally shave their beard but keep their mustache, here all around the clean shave is the fashion of



the day. Very few keep moustaches and very seldom a foreigner – Jew – is seen with long beard. My dear and respected friend Mr. Karroub's younger daughter, Fatimi, once softly touching my beard with her little hands said: “What a long mustache you have got my Shaikh.” Her knowledge of the English language is well-developed, but still she knows no such word as beard. The Americans, approached rightly and talked to reasonably, are ready to accept the truth. (Vol. 1: Issue 1, p. 24)

### One Year's Moslem Missionary Work in America (a brief report)

It being the very first attempt to approach the Americans with the Mission of Islam, I had to pass through all the difficulties that always confront a beginner of a work. I had no precedent before me to guide me and, therefore, much of my time has been spent in making experiences as regards the selection for my headquarters and the ways of approaching Americans. I cannot claim to have done any great work, but I do hope, in the Grace of Allah, that in clearing the way for the future Missionaries of Islam I have done some pioneer work and sown the seed of Truth throughout the land which will grow up in time and show in big, tall, strong trees to feed and shelter thousands, and send out healthy vibrations to millions.

The first difficulty I had to encounter was with the Immigration Officers, who ordered me to return on the same steamer on which I had come, merely because I was a Missionary of the Moslem faith, and on my refusal to return and asking permission to Appeal to Higher Authorities in Washington I was placed in the Detention House for about seven weeks. Those were the days of great trial, but I count them as the days of blessings, because I found the opportunity of offering prayers to God and Meditation and planning the Scheme for future work. Moreover, I began my work of preaching quietly among others detained like myself. The first of those who agreed with me there and joined our faith was brother Hamid (Mr. RJ Rochford), who was not allowed to land and was sent back with others. This good brother is now in England and keeps in touch with me by correspondence. He is my first convert to Islam after landing here. He is figuring to come over to Canada, and he is zealous, I hope he will do great work in time to bring others to the blessed fold of Islam.

### Lectures

During the past 12 months I have delivered about 50 Public Lectures in the Cities of New York, Chicago, Detroit, Dowagiac [MI], Michigan City, Sioux City, Sioux Falls, etc. All of these Lectures were previously announced in the daily papers.

### Heavy Correspondence

During past 15 months the number of mails Received is about 4,000 and Dispatched about 15,000. Thanks are due to Brothers James Sodick, Yusuf Khan, Shaikh Abdullah J.L. Mott and Sister Rahatullah who have been helping me in the correspondence work. (Vol. 1: Issue 1, pp. 12-14)

# Our Media Response

Muslim Sunrise contributors have been actively engaged in responding to the American press on articles of religious importance. Some samples of their recent published responses are below:

**Response to USA Today article, "8 Killed, 19 Wounded in Pakistan Mosque Shooting," Oct. 7, 2005**

Printed on Oct. 12, 2005

Dear Editor:

As an American Ahmadi Muslim who was born in Pakistan, I was saddened to read in your newspaper about the October 7 murders of eight innocent Ahmadi Muslims in the Pakistani village of Mong, as they sat praying in a mosque during the beginning of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan ("8 killed, 19 wounded in Pakistan mosque shooting", 7 Oct.).

It is both strange and fitting that this tragedy occurred, to the day, 47 years after the day when Pakistan's "democratic" government first lost its democratic ideals and collapsed under martial law (Oct 7, 1958). Since that time, the Pakistani government and its policies have had a turbulent and unstable history, and religious intolerance and extremism have grown increasingly more acceptable. Now, with the recent devastating earthquakes underscoring that the land of Pakistan is itself turbulent and unstable, I hope and pray this natural disaster can at least galvanize the country into putting aside their sectarian violence in the name of the higher causes of humanity, tolerance and freedom.

Arshad M. Khan  
Chino Hills, California

**Response to Washington Times article, "8 Killed, 19 Wounded in Pakistan Mosque," Oct. 7, 2005**

Printed on Oct. 17, 2005

Dear Editor:

Gruesome earthquake pictures from Pakistan draw an ironic parallel with the powerful and graphic images depicted in various international newspapers which covered the recent invasion of an Ahmadi mosque in village south of Islamabad. Over forty national and international newspaper accounts, including your own, reported masked gunmen raided and showered bullets on an Ahmadiyya Muslim community while they peacefully engaged in morning prayers. While Pakistan has sought the compassion and relief aid the world is extending, dramatic images in world papers capturing the plight of Ahmadi Muslims have failed to win the sympathies of Pakistani politicians themselves for years. This is a blatant double standard, which holds for the suffering of minority communities in Pakistan in general, and with the Ahmadiyya community in particular.

In 1974, the Government of Pakistan passed the Second Amendment to the Pakistan Constitution, which expressly declared Ahmadi Muslims to be non-Muslim, and passed the "anti-blasphemy" penal provisions in 1984 and 1986, which regards virtually any public act of worship or devotion by an Ahmadiyya Muslim as a criminal offense.

I am an Ahmadi Muslim and spent my childhood years in the same town of Mandi Bahauddin where the frightful murders which violated this holy month of Ramadan where perpetrated. The overwhelming grief of the families of those who died within the bullet pierced and blood splattered walls of the Ahmadiyya mosque, is the same grief and torment that families of earthquake victims are enduring now. Certainly, the experience of pain is universal. Now is the season for Pakistan to wake up having slept on this glaring human rights issue as though in a coma for over 30 years.

Bilal A. Rana  
Houston, Texas

**Response to News Story, Observer News (Fairfax County, VA), Jan. 5, 2006**

Printed on Jan. 6, 2006

To the editor:

Dec. 7 marked the 30-year point of when the Indonesian army invaded East Timor, part of a small island off the coast of Indonesia, and killed more than 200,000 innocent victims in one of the worst genocides of the 20th century.

Thirty years is a long time to reflect over the wrongs committed by a nation which has had its share of internal strife, especially under the spotlight and constant pressure of an international community that seems to have

progressively made the shift towards appreciating the value of human rights. However, this pressure doesn't seem to have had much effect.

Take the case of the minority Muslim sect known as Ahmadiyya. Indonesia, a country with the highest population of Muslims, has allowed the persecution of Ahmadis at the hands of religious zealots to go unchecked. The persecution is based on differences in the interpretation of Islamic teachings between the Ahmadis and the mainstream Muslims.

A wave of persecution has included vandalism and subsequent closure of Ahmadiyya mosques, burning Ahmadi homes and violence against Ahmadi men, women and children. The religious zealots and the crowds that support them are a stigma on the stature of Indonesia in the international community.

The 2005 International Religious Freedom Report issued by the U.S. Department of State highlighted the forms of persecution being carried out against minority sects including the Ahmadiyya in Indonesia and other countries.

Being an Ahmadi Muslim and a citizen of a country that places human rights and freedom of conscience at the highest levels, I consider myself lucky to be able to practice my faith freely. I just hope and pray that we as citizens of this great nation can share these universal human values with the rest of the world in a peaceful, respectful manner and make them understand, as we understand, that these values are essential to our peaceful existence as one human race.

I request our government officials, local and national, to place the issue of human rights and freedom of conscience at the top of their list during their discussions with Indonesian officials. As the history of East Timor tells us, suppression of freedom, be it geographic, religious or otherwise, is an unconscionable act that may start with insignificant implications but always ends in widespread, fatal repercussions.

Syed Faaiz Iftikhar  
Herndon, VA

**The Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) said:  
Allah will turn with mercy  
to whoever repents before  
the sun rises from the west  
(Muslim).**

# No God But God: The Origins, Future and Evolution of Islam

Reza Aslan, *No God But God: The Origins, Future and Evolution of Islam* (Random House, 2005)

By Zahid M. Mian

In *No God but God*, Reza Aslan does an admirable job of tracing the history of the Muslim Ummah. The fact that he did this in only a few pages is both commendable and lamentable because while the overall work is well-documented, the details are sketchy and likely to mislead those who want to treat this as a primer on the history of Islam. Though at times he seems a little unfair or even harsh towards some of the holy personages in Islamic history, in general he portrays a rather balanced view. His coverage of the major sects, their genesis and practices, is decent. In essence, he contends that the Muslim Ummah does not speak with one voice and is fragmented. It is impossible, therefore, to paint it with a broad stroke. Islam was formed over a period of fourteen centuries and it is now in a struggle to redefine itself. Aslan endeavors to explain how the often chaotic and political actions of the Muslim Ummah over the past fourteen centuries, and more specifically the last century, led to the events of September 11, 2001.

The book is well researched but readers may not always appreciate its scholarship, especially devout Muslims who have been taught alternate versions of the Islamic history. Anyone who considers the Hadith and historical background leading up to the Prophet's rise as historical facts may want to skip the first few chapters. One gets the sense that Aslan is focused on a non-Muslim audience, or one that is liberal enough to consider research that renders some historically recognized events as fiction. After explaining the nature in which Islamic history was recorded and the likelihood of some events being false, he nevertheless finds the topic relevant because they serve to offer a greater truth. Thus, the historicity of the topic is irrelevant to him, as he states, but he offers some of the more unlikely scenarios as facts. For example, did Khadija really say to Muhammad, "I think your Lord must have come to hate you"? Did Muhammad really take part in the "time honored tradition" of raiding commercial

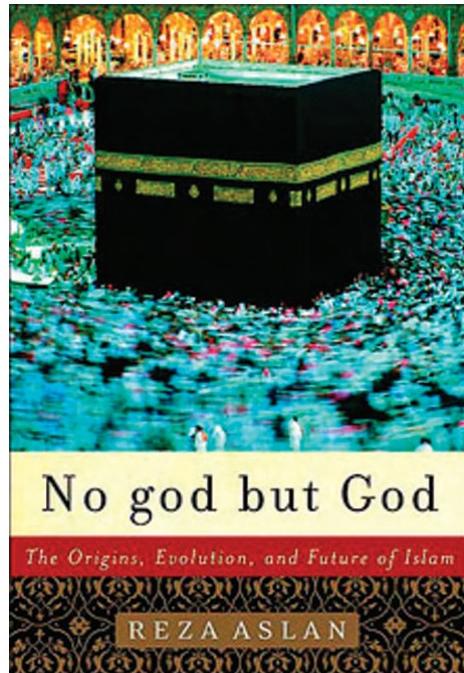
caravans? Were the rightly guided Caliphs really disgruntled men, and did they really despise Ali? Did Umar threaten to burn Fatima if she did not accept his caliphate? Did Uthman really burn some pages of the verses revealed to Muhammad that were eventually omitted from the official

the history of various movements and political conflicts that have shaped today's Ummah. He is able to juxtapose these events with events in Christianity, which makes one realize that some events in Islamic history are similar to the ones in other major religions. Readers, especially non-Muslims, will appreciate the events throughout history—from pre-Islam to the formation of Al-Qaeda—that have given rise to various religious and political movements. He asserts that after fourteen centuries of political discord and battle for the right to interpret the message of Islam, in the fifteenth century the Muslims will undergo an internal struggle to redefine Islam and the Ummah. He argues this well, but in doing so, he renders Islam as a movement of political stratagem rather than Divine guidance. Did God reveal to Muhammad to abolish interest, or was it an egalitarian need Muhammad found necessary to make Medina prosperous? Did God reveal punishment for murder or was it something necessary to create peace and order between the various tribes of Medina?

In the end, Aslan wonders who will write the next chapter in Islam. He offers some failed experiments, but concludes that the Ummah will eventually remove bigotry and fanaticism from among itself, two of the "false gods" most prevalent, and presumably the reason for its decline.

It would have served the author well to write about the Ahmadiyya Community in Islam. While mentioning Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, Mawdudi, and others, he should have mentioned Mirza Ghulam Ahmad because his community is the only one in the Ummah that follows the institution of Caliphate and is the only community which has been singled out in a government's Constitution as non-Muslim. If the point of his book was that Muslims need to redefine, or better yet, re-establish, the Islamic faith, then no person in the last few centuries has offered more in that cause than the aforementioned founder of the Ahmadiyya Community; if he feels bigotry and fanaticism are the biggest problems facing Islam today, no where is that more obvious than in Pakistan's Constitution.

Ultimately, then, the book provides an adequate introduction to Islamic history, but readers should be willing to accept the author's obvious biases.



version? Questions like these deserve far more detail and can be proven spurious, but the author's treatment of such events as facts is disappointing.

The reader will appreciate Aslan's style of writing. He opens each chapter in the present tense and then goes on to explain further that scene in its proper historical context. His thoughts are well connected and flow effortlessly. His skills as a writer are evident and most useful in explaining the acts and terms of the Ummah. He does, however, make statements that Muslims are likely to find offensive, or, at the very least, questionable. Is salat to be "suspended" during time of illness or in travel? Do some verses of the Qur'an abrogate other, previously revealed verses? These are highly controversial topics and deserve more research than the cursory glance granted by the author. Perhaps his greatest strength is his narration of

# Existence of God & Human Suffering

Imam Mubasher Ahmad, Chicago, IL

*The laws of nature, that sometimes cause these sufferings, are put in place by God the Creator actually to support and evolve life on the earth in its totality. If these natural laws are taken out of the universal design of God the Creator, the very existence of every living thing will be jeopardized. Therefore, the disasters that are caused by natural laws are no reflection of the Creator's cruelty over humans.*

According to the Holy Qur'an, our present life, with all its joys and sufferings, is merely transitory and illusionary. The passage of human life continues after crossing the valley of death. Our present life is but temporary and fleeting, and the life after life is permanent and perpetual. Death may be the ultimate human suffering in this world, but it is certainly not the end of life. Death is just like a door through which we have to pass to enter into a new dimension of life. In Islam, the next life is a reality beyond any doubt. Both the dimensions of human life — the life in this world and life yet to come — are welded together, one merging into the other like a splendid waterfall turning into a mighty river. The only difference is this that the second phase of human life is reflective of how we conduct ourselves in the first phase of life. The joys as well as the sufferings shall continue in the life Hereafter.

Therefore, according to Islamic perspective, many who might have lived a life full of sufferings in this transitory world may enjoy the most blissful and everlasting life in the next world in what is known as the Heaven; and many who might have enjoyed sinful pleasures of this material world, may go through a grievous torment in life yet to come in what is known as the Hell. It all depends how we carry out ourselves under given circumstances in this life.

Islam acknowledges that life is full of suffering, starting as early as the very process of human conception in a mother's womb and

during the process of childbirth.

In the Holy Quran, we read:

"And We [i.e. GOD] have enjoined on man to be good to his parents — his mother bears



him in suffering after suffering of weakness," (31:15)

Again, we read: "Certainly there was a long period of time when man was almost insubstantial. We created him from a sticking sperm-drop then We caused him to pass through a trial of precarious stages; then, turned him into a being capable of hearing and seeing. Verily, We have shown him the way, (giving him full freedom of choice) whether he be grateful or ungrateful." (76:2-4)

Again we read in the Holy Quran:

"And We have enjoined on every human being to be good to his parents. His mother bears him with pain, and brings him forth with severe pangs (of childbirth)," (46:16)

Not only both the mother and the newborn baby have to go through a tremendous painful suffering in the process of child-birth, the Holy Quran also acknowledges the existence of human suffering in various forms throughout human experience.

## Natural Disasters

First, there are natural disasters — the climatic tragedies like earthquakes, floods, lightening, storms and famines. We can also include in such calamities the outbreak of contagious, epidemic and endemic diseases, plagues and pestilence. And, moreover, there are innumerable illnesses and bodily sufferings.

These calamities and diseases do occur in consequence of a wider circle of natural laws that are necessary to exist in the vast universe, in which human life is an important but still a very small portion.

The laws of nature, that sometimes cause these sufferings, are put in place by God the Creator actually to support and evolve life on the earth in its totality. If these natural laws are taken out of the universal design of God the Creator, the very existence of every living thing will be jeopardized. Therefore, the disasters that are caused by natural laws are no reflection of the Creator's cruelty over humans. According to the

Holy Quran, the study of natural phenomenon makes us understand that, despite the devastation suffered by some humans, God's Mercy (*rahmah*) is the most overwhelming attribute in Nature that creates, maintains and evolves all forms of life including human life.

## Man-made Afflictions

Secondly, there are the man-made inflictions that cause other humans to suffer physical pain and mental anguish and sometimes even death, such as — false accusation, wrongful

imprisonment, kidnapping, rape, theft, physical and emotional abuse, economical exploitation, slavery, wrongful occupation of other's property and land, war and holocaust. The list of these sinful acts and social and international crimes is very long indeed. We may also add to the list the environmental destruction and pollution caused by us humans.

**T**hese and similar other inflictions caused by some are due to the abuse of what we call "the freedom of man's will." And we certainly cannot say that freedom of will is an evil in itself. Without free will, man would lose the very essence of his existence. Therefore, causing suffering, pain and death to others through the misuse and abuse of one's free will, humans remain responsible to God, and not God to humans.

To eliminate suffering caused by humans, God has commanded us not to inflict any harm on others, and those who do so, must face the consequences. Therefore, to establish, a "just" society is one of the most important obligations taught by Islam. Those who may escape the corporal punishment in this world, for them God's punishment shall be waiting in the life to come.

### **Self-inflicted Pain**

Thirdly, there are acts of "self-inflicted suffering": These could be accidental or intentional. The Holy Quran prohibits inflicting self-injuries, specifically committing of suicide. The sufferings that we may inflict upon ourselves are mostly caused by our mental condition that we have the choice to control with or without the help of others. These miseries are usually caused by our anger, jealousy, depression, or getting into addiction — such as drug-abuse, alcoholism, and gambling. For all these kind of self-inflicted sufferings, man himself remains responsible and accountable to God, and not the vice-versa. God is ever ready to forgive our trespasses against our own souls.

The Holy Quran is very clear on this point that even the smallest of an action — good or bad — committed in this life by any human being will not go to waste! "Then whosoever has done so much as an atom's weight of good will see its good result, and whoso has done an atom's weight of evil will also see its evil result." (Chapter 99, *Al-Zilzal*, verses 7-9)

Again, the Holy Quran says: "Every soul shall taste of death. And you shall be paid in full your rewards only on the day of Resurrection. So whosoever is removed away from the Fire (of Hell) and is made to enter Heaven, (that person) had indeed attained his goal. And life of this world is nothing but an illusionary enjoyment. You shall surely be tried in your possessions and in your persons." (Chapter 3, *Al-Imran*, v. 186-187)

Therefore, according to the teachings of the Holy Quran, it does not matter how much a person suffers in this world, as long as he or she is engaged, according to his or her capacity, in repelling the evil and doing the good works. The joys and comforts of the life yet to come are far greater, unparalleled and everlasting as compared with human sufferings of this life! The human sufferings of the present life are termed as "a trial" — a test, an evaluation and a validation to measure the success and strength of each human soul, its capacity to do good deeds.

So, according to the Holy Quran, all the tragedy, affliction, anguish, grief and fear that we may have to go through in this life are actually tests and trials from God. If we succeed in the test by remaining prayerful and patient, showing complete perseverance and trust in God during the period of suffering, and we continue doing good deeds, and we avoid evil thoughts and actions, then the end result is that God grants us boundless joy, happiness and His everlasting pleasure.

The Holy Quran says: "Do you think that you will enter Heaven, while you have not yet suffered similar afflictions which befell those who have passed away before you? Distress and affliction befell them, and they were made to suffer violent shaking, so that the Messenger and those who believed along with him cried out: "When will come the help of God?" Then they were told, 'Behold! Surely the help of God is always nearby.'" (Chapter 2, *Al-Baqara*, verse 215)

By understanding the continuous nature of life in its totality, the human suffering does not remain an issue to

be settled by challenging the existence or goodness of our Lord God - the Creator. Once we are able to conceive and believe that every soul has to enter another dimension of life by passing through the door of death, only then we can fully appreciate the existence of God Who reaches the depth of our souls to enhance its strength through our endurance of sufferings, and thus makes us the winners in the long run.

The Holy Quran further elaborates this point by narrating to us how all the men and women of God, the prophets, the messengers and the righteous persons — both male and female — have gone through all sorts of human sufferings, but none of them ever lost their hope, their trust in God's help, and they endured all the pain, anguish and fear with utmost patience, sincerity and perseverance. At the end they all were the winners.

For example, Adam and Eve had to encounter the devil — the whispering tempter "who made them suffer to forget a clear commandment of God! As a consequence, they lost Paradise and entered into a life of labor and pain. But still they retained dominion over all other creatures on the earth and received forgiveness of God. Abraham was put to many terrible trials, the most difficult one was to offer his first-born child in sacrifice. He ended up being the father of nations "his progeny becoming countless like the stars in heavens. Job's (Ayub's) sufferings are proverbial, but he retained his confidence in Divine Goodness, and his suffering became a medium of refining his righteousness. Moses had to run for his life under the threats of Pharaoh and for 40 long years he suffered many pains and disappointments by the hands of his



*To eliminate suffering caused by humans, God has commanded us not to inflict any harm on others, and those who do so, must face the consequences. Therefore, to establish, a "just" society is one of the most important obligations taught by Islam. Those who may escape the corporal punishment in this world, for them God's punishment shall be waiting in the life to come.*



*Therefore, for us Muslims and all others, the important matter should be to learn how to handle human sufferings, retaining full faith in a Loving God. The Holy Quran teaches us “The truly righteous — are those who endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship and peril. That is, who are patient in poverty and affliction, and in time of war.” (2:178)*

enemies and his own people, but he never lost his faith in the Almighty God. And we all know the story of Jesus and his mother Mary. Virgin Mary had to suffer the grievous insults from her people on becoming pregnant prior to getting married. Jesus the beloved of God suffered physical torture and was put on the cross with the intent to be killed on the wood — to die an accursed death! But God did not forsake him, and God did honor his mother. Now billions revere them both as innocent and sinless.

It is also a matter recorded in history that the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be on him) was the most successful man both in the realms of religion as well as in temporal affairs. He has been acknowledged as the most influential man in history. His main task was, on the one hand, to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, to establish firm faith in the existence of one God - and to establish perpetual worship of the Most-Loving and Most Merciful God; and, on the other hand, his mission was to establish a just and benevolent social order. Despite tremendous personal pain and anguish that he was made to suffer through his life on this earth, he achieved an unparalleled success in both the domains

After receiving an answer to his heart-rending prayers concerning the moral depreciation, social injustice, lawlessness and mutual fights in the fragmented nation of his fellow countrymen in Arabia, when he started his mission as the Prophet of God to remove all social, moral and spiritual ills around him, he suffered the most bitter persecution and oppression at the hands of his own people - those very people that he wanted to help and guide. He was scorned and derided, abused and tormented. Trash was thrown in his way, and filth was laid on his head. The vagabonds beat him up most severely; throwing stones and rocks, making him bleed almost to death. Some of his

followers were brutally murdered. Some of his dear ones were split apart alive by tying their legs to two strong camels and making them run into opposite directions. Some of the women who believed in him, were butchered shamelessly by his enemies.

Even when he and his followers were forced to leave their hometown Mecca and they settled in Medina - a town more than 200 miles away from Mecca, the enemy did not allow them to live in peace, and initiated armed attacks and made them suffer the horrors of war. The brutal enemy mutilated the dead bodies of his dear ones. They cut their noses and ears, and in one instance even took out the liver and chewed it raw. He himself received severe injuries on his face in one of such battles.

Not only that, he suffered many personal domestic tragedies in his life. He lost some of his children while they were young, and some died in his lifetime as grown ups. He had four sons, but all of them passed away in their infancy. Despite all the enormous human suffering throughout his life, Holy Prophet Muhammad (saw) always had a warm smile on his face. Throughout his life he remained cheerful and a tremendous source of peace of mind and comfort for all who got in touch with him. He succeeded in establishing a firm faith in the existence of God in the hearts of thousands upon thousand, and he successfully replaced injustice with equity, cruelty and oppression with forgiveness and mercy.

By studying his personal sufferings juxtaposed on his most successful life, and through his practical demonstration of compassion, peace, comfort, service to others, love for all and hatred for none, we find the most shining example in the person of the Most Noble Prophet Muhammad (may peace and blessings of God be on him) of reconciling the existence of a Compassionate and Loving God and human

suffering. It was not merely an intellectual reconciliation, it was a factual and most impressive reconciliation between God and human suffering in action.

**T**herefore, for us Muslims and all others, the important matter should be to learn how to handle human sufferings, retaining full faith in a Loving God!

The Holy Quran teaches us “The truly righteous — are those who endure with fortitude misfortune, hardship and peril. That is, who are patient in poverty and affliction, and in time of war.” (2:178)

Again, in the Holy Quran we read:

“O you who believe! Seek (God’s) help with perfect patience and prayer; for surely God is with the patiently persevering (*Sabireen*). And do not count as dead those who are killed in the cause of God. Rather they are living; only you perceive not (their life). And We will certainly reward you after trying you with something of fear and hunger and some loss of substance and of lives, and fruits (of your toil). Give glad tidings to the patiently persevering; who, when a calamity befalls them, say, ‘Surely to God we belong and to Him shall we return.’ It is they on whom descend the blessings and mercy (*rahmah*) from their Lord God; and it is they who are rightly guided.” (Chapter 2, verses 154-157)

At the end, I would like to say: All praise belongs to God, the Lord of all the universes, Most Gracious, Ever Merciful, the Master of the day of Judgment. ♦

This paper was presented at an interfaith symposium, in Zion , Illinois, December 8, 2002. Imam Mubasher Ahmad, serves as the Midwest Regional Missionary InCharge, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, Chicago.

**Worship and praise** belong to Him Who is Everlasting;  
He has not equal or His like.  
He alone endures, all else is but perishable;  
To love others is only an idle tale.  
All are others,  
He alone is the darling of my heart;  
The only cry of my heart:  
**Holy is He Who watches over me.**  
Holy is His Divine might,  
Grandeur is His alone;  
Those close to Him stand atremble,  
And angels are awe-stricken.  
His Mercy is all-pervasive;  
How can one be grateful enough?  
We are all His creation;  
Love Him we must.  
To love others is contrary to His Pride  
Blessed be this day;  
**Holy is He Who watches over me.**  
Every comfort we enjoy  
Is His Gift and Grace;  
Every heart is pledged to Him  
And is filled with His Grandeur.  
We had better submit to Him alone,  
For in it lies all felicity and auspiciousness;  
Blessed be this day;  
**Holy is He Who watches over me.**  
He alone is the Succour and Support of all;  
His mercy is manifest.  
He alone is Dear to us;  
He alone is our Beloved.  
He alone is Indispensable;  
Everything other than Him is false.  
Blessed be this day;  
**Holy is He Who watches over me.**  
The favour is Yours, O Lord;  
I am but an offering at Your threshold.  
You have granted the faith;

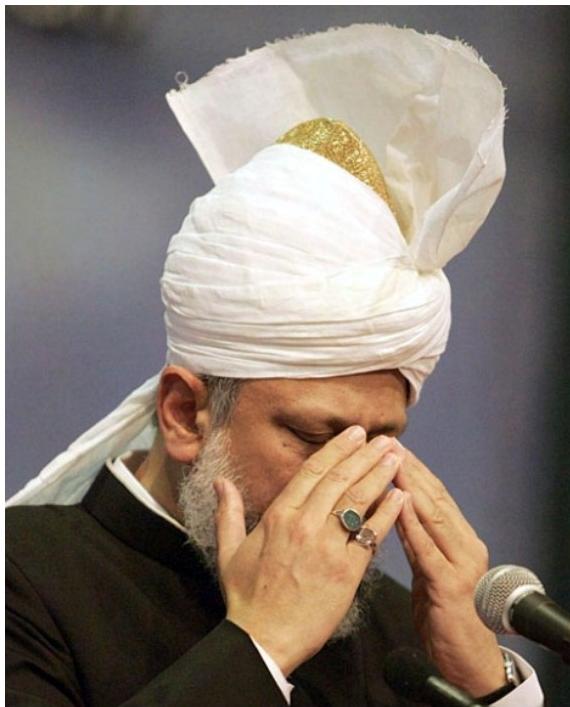
# ‘Holy is He Who watches over me’

Hazrat Ahmad, Founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

**You alone are** the Protector at all times.  
Your Grace covers us every moment;  
You are the Most Gracious, Ever-Merciful.  
Blessed be this day;  
**Holy is He Who watches over me.**  
How can You be thanked enough;  
All that is mine, is Yours!  
You have filled my home with every bounty;  
All darkness vanished when Your light came;  
Blessed be this day;  
**Holy is He Who watches over me.**

*[The Essence of Islam]*

# Natural Disasters and Divine Punishment



*In the past 1,100 years there had been eleven massive (death toll exceeding 50,000) earthquakes, yet since 1905 thirteen such earthquakes have occurred. Huzur said he noticed the perspective with which the Western world welcomed the new millennium was purely materialistic and hedonistic while God was totally forgotten. Huzur said in the last hundred years (from 1900 to 2000) the distress caused by man-made disasters was immense; in wars spread across 35 countries ninety five million people lost their lives.*

Below is an English summary of Friday Sermon delivered by Hazrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, the spiritual leader of the Worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community. The edited translation was prepared by Muslim Television Ahmadiyya, January 27, 2006. He is referred to by Ahmadi Muslims as Huzur.

**C**iting verse 118 of Surah Hud (11:118) Huzur delivered his Friday Sermon on the phenomenon of Natural Disasters and Divine Punishment.

Huzur said recently huge natural calamities have taken place during the time of Jalsa Salana Qadian; the 2003 earthquake in Iran and the tsunami of 2004. Furthermore he mentioned the October 2005 earthquake in Pakistan. He also briefly touched upon the heavy destruction caused by this earthquake and the depravation the victims are enduring in the chaotic aftermath exasperated by the severe cold weather conditions where survival has become a challenge. Huzur mentioned Humanity First's continued aid efforts here and said that it was our obligation to serve humankind.

Huzur said many ask him if these were Divine punishments then why were the innocent killed in these disasters? He said the Promised Messiah has expounded this matter but before citing his writings, Huzur wished to give a few references of the outlook of Pakistan religious

scholars in the wake of the October 2005 earthquake, all collected from newspapers.

Dr. Mufti Qadri wrote that the earthquake was an admonitory sign for the masses and the rulers; for the masses because although they professed Shahada their deeds brought it in bad repute. It was a moment for concern for the religious scholars in light of the current sectarian violence which has reached an extent that people of some sects are killing people of the other sects. A Salahudin Yusuf Sahib wrote that it was time to reform; that when kufr (non-belief) exceeds limits

Allah sends a deterrent. Explaining the death of innocents he quoted a hadith that when Allah's chastisement comes everyone is destroyed but on the Day of Judgment the reckoning will be according to each person's intentions. He wrote that this calamity was not a sign of the advent of Jesus.

Hafiz Idrees Sahib wrote quoting a hadith that time when bounty of war will be made

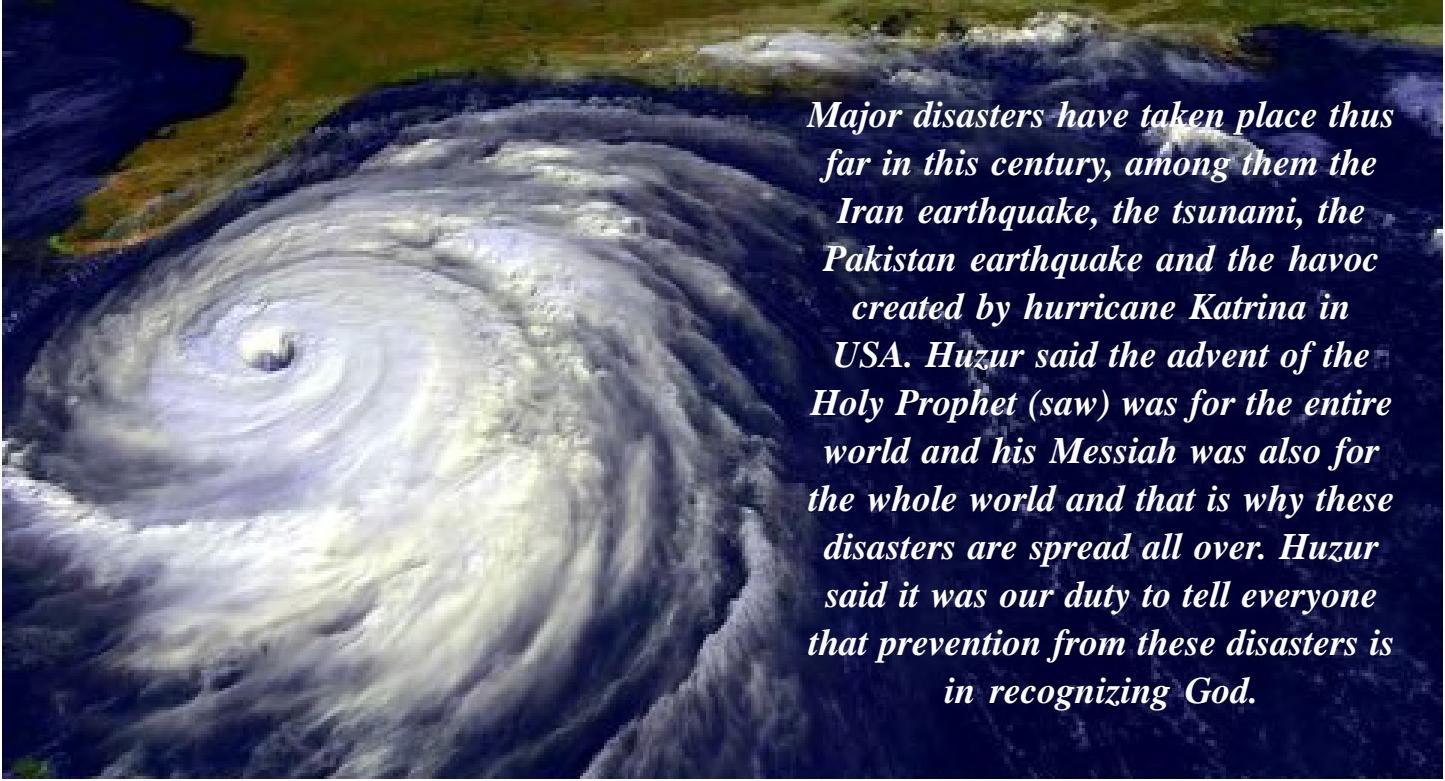
personal property and there will be an increase in the number of singing women and the sounds from the mosques will grow louder than when people will face earthquakes. He wrote that this earthquake was a consequence of 'our negligence' and had nothing to do with the advent of Jesus



that it was a warning to turn to our Master.

Huzur said although his comments were accurate his inference was flawed.

Ropri Sahib wrote that when a body of people exceeds in disobedience then they are Divinely punished. Professor Abdur Rahman Ludhianawi wrote that this was a warning to reform. He said that the tsunami had also struck where people



*Major disasters have taken place thus far in this century, among them the Iran earthquake, the tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake and the havoc created by hurricane Katrina in USA. Huzur said the advent of the Holy Prophet (saw) was for the entire world and his Messiah was also for the whole world and that is why these disasters are spread all over. Huzur said it was our duty to tell everyone that prevention from these disasters is in recognizing God.*

had exceeded limits. He said although the earthquake was a sign, but it could not be considered definitive as regards the advent of Jesus. Hafiz Raza Sahib wrote that the earthquake was a warning for the Muslims to turn to the Master. He said the Holy Qur'an mentions accounts of earlier nations who were destroyed. He said the sign of the advent of Imam Mahdi (the Messiah) is that evil will be prevalent, therefore the earthquake could be considered a sign; however his advent will be when evil will exceed limits! Huzur remarked so the limits have not exceeded yet! Hafiz Abdul Mannan wrote that the earthquake was a consequence of negligence and a lesson in the fact that when Allah decrees there is no respite.

**H**uzur said all these people acknowledge that this calamity came because there were and still are wrongdoings; however it is not enough to merely acknowledge. The advent of the Messiah has taken place and it is the command of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings be on him) to accept him, there have been heavenly signs to substantiate his coming, so what are they waiting for now? Since 1905, when the big earthquake took place in Kangra, India during the lifetime of the Promised Messiah (as), these signs are repeatedly appearing and are therefore a warning for each Muslim as well as non-Muslim.

Huzur said in the past 1,100 years there had been eleven massive (death toll exceeding 50,000) earthquakes, yet since 1905 thirteen such

earthquakes have occurred. He said he noticed the perspective with which the Western world welcomed the new millennium was purely materialistic and hedonistic while God was totally forgotten. Huzur said in the last hundred years (from 1900 to 2000) the distress caused by man-made disasters was immense; in wars spread across 35 countries ninety five million people lost their lives.

This century so far major disasters have taken place, among them the Iran earthquake, the tsunami, the Pakistan earthquake and the havoc created by hurricane Katrina in USA.

Huzur said the advent of the Holy Prophet (saw) was for the entire world and his Messiah was also for the whole world and that is why these disasters are spread all over. He said it was our duty to tell everyone that prevention from these disasters is in recognizing God.

Huzur read a couple of further relevant excerpts from Pakistani newspapers dating 1992 one quoting verse 11 of Surah Al Qamar (54:11), Huzur said that in this age there is only one person who prayed to Allah for help in this way and since 1905 Divine signs have been manifesting themselves. Huzur said these preaching religious scholars should do some soul-searching as to where they stand.

With reference to the Promised Messiah' (as) writings explaining why innocent lives are also lost in disasters Huzur related the famine of Mecca when the poor lost their lives and the wicked Abu Jahl survived saying that the chastisement is only for the wrongdoer, the

innocent are martyrs and they have glad-tidings. Referring to San-Francisco earthquakes occurring in his times the Promised Messiah said he did not consider that those occurred because of the rejection of his truth but that the denial of his truth has been a cause of the earthquakes, because Allah states in the Holy Qur'an that the punishment of disaster does not befall people unless a prophet has been sent to them (26:209). Huzur said the religious scholars he had quoted earlier who denied that the earthquake was a sign of the advent of the Messiah were surely not accepting this Quranic verse.

**T**he Promised Messiah (as) said the victims of the San Francisco earthquakes were killed due to their past sins however, this was a sign of his advent, as he had written in Braheen e Ahmadiyya that many earthquakes will take place in his time and this will be a sign of his truth. In short it is the way of Allah that when His prophets are rejected disasters occur and all and sundry lose lives in that God's sense of honor is aroused, however, the big culprit's time comes in the end.

Huzur said that unless the people of this world accepted the message of the Promised Messiah (as) they will not be saved.

Huzur prayed that may we keep our hearts pure and take God's message to others and may by means of the prayers of the Promised Messiah (as) we and our generations to come maintain the distinction through which the difference between us and others is evident.

# Word Search

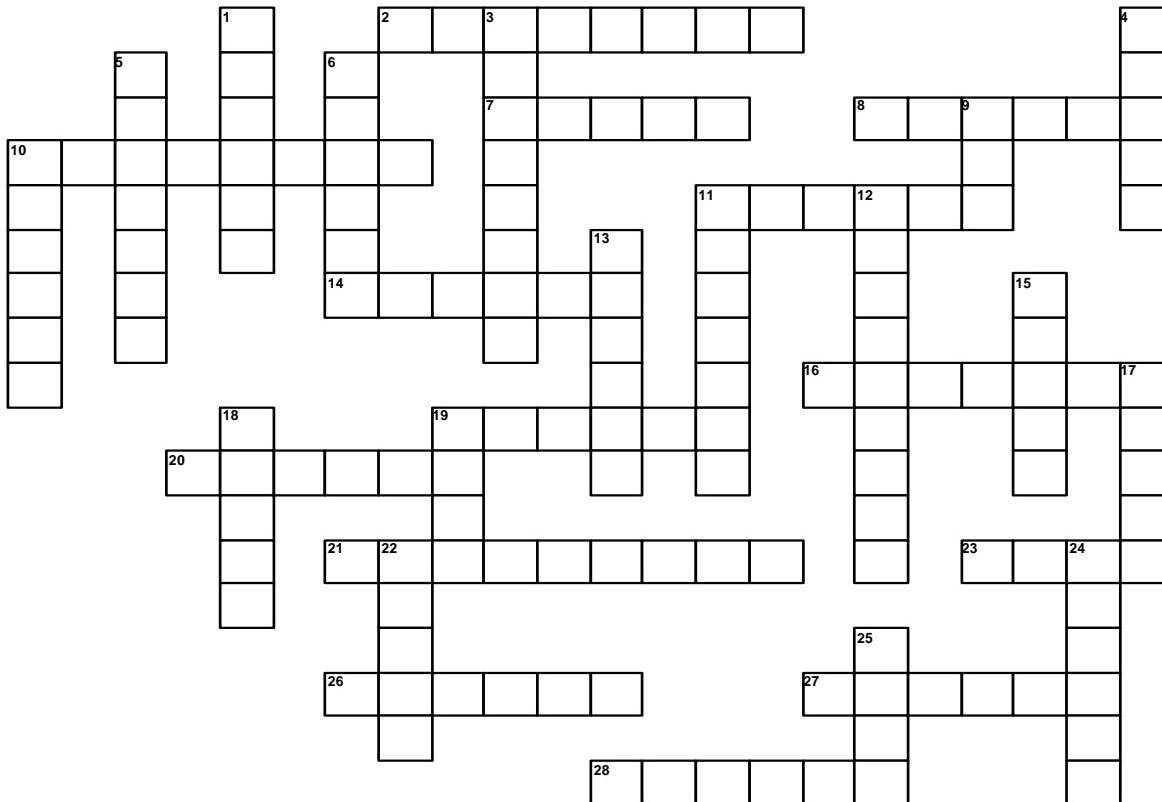
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[www.WordSearchMaker.com](http://www.WordSearchMaker.com)

Blanket	Goat	Market	Policy	Teacher
Bridge	Happy	Mecca	Rabbit	Tin
Carpet	Harmony	Mercy	Rocket	Toast
Chicago	Honor	Mother	Russia	Trust
College	Islam	Motto	Senator	Truth
Cow	Judaism	New York	Serenity	Unity
England	Khalifa	Orange	Ship	Vehicle
Football	Liberty	Paris	Sleep	Victory
Ghana	Life	Peace	Taoism	

# Crossword Puzzle

**Hint - Find Answers Throughout Issue!**



[www.CrosswordWeaver.com](http://www.CrosswordWeaver.com)

## ACROSS

- 2** Late Catholic Pope (2 w ds)
- 7** The Master
- 8** The Ever Merciful
- 10** 2005 Baseball Champs (2 w ds)
- 11** The Creator
- 14** Segment: Letters to the \_\_\_\_
- 16** Successor in Arabic
- 19** The Most Gracious
- 20** "the Awakened One" in Buddhism
- 21** Revered Guru in Sikhism (2 w ds)
- 23** "\_\_\_\_ for all, hatred for none"
- 26** The Bestower of Peace
- 27** Husband to Mary
- 28** JK Rowling's "Harry \_\_\_\_"

## DOWN

- 1** The Answerer of Prayers
- 3** Relief organization: \_\_\_\_ First
- 4** The All Hearing
- 5** Concept of Godhead in Christianity
- 6** Washington, Bush
- 9** The Truth
- 10** The Most Loving
- 11** US Hurricane in late August
- 12** 2005-6 NCAA Football Champs
- 13** Hindu god known as the Creator
- 15** Hindu god known as the Destroyer
- 17** NYC: The Big \_\_\_\_
- 18** Established Muslim Sunrise in 1921
- 19** The Lord
- 22** The First
- 24** Hindu god known as the Preserver
- 25** The Light

# Q&A

## 1 What does Islam mean?

The word Islam in the Arabic language is derived from the root SLM and means “peace” and “obedience”. The religion is called Islam because it offers peace and requires complete submission to the will of God. According to the Quran, there is only one religion acceptable to God and that is complete submission to His Will.

## 2 What was the religion of early prophets?

Islam was also the religion of the early prophets like Abraham<sup>as</sup>, Moses<sup>as</sup> and Jesus<sup>as</sup>, because they also submitted themselves to the will of God. As the Bible shows, or rather, does not show, there was no name assigned to the teachings for the Israelites. In fact, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Confucianism are all names given to the teachings of prophets after the time of the prophets. But the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> are clearly assigned the name *Islam* in the revealed scripture during his lifetime. Thus, we read in the Quran, “This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as religion” (5:4).

## 3 Do Muslims believe in all the prophets and revealed books of other religions?

Islam, in fact, *requires* its followers to believe in all earlier prophets and Scriptures. According to Islam all the great religions that preceded it were revealed by God to His chosen messengers.

A Jew today believes only in the prophets of Israel; a Christian believes in Jesus Christ and, to a lesser degree, in the prophets of Israel; a Buddhist believes only in Buddha and a Zoroastrian in Zoroaster; A Hindu in the sages

who appeared in India and a Confucius in Confucius. But a Muslim believes in all these prophets and also in the prophethood of Muhammad, the Seal of the Prophets, may peace and blessings be upon him.

## 4 What are the five articles of faith?

The beliefs in Islam are not based on superstition or irrational conviction. They are presented in the Holy Quran in a systematic way and are supported by logical arguments. In Islam a belief must make sense to the believer; otherwise it becomes a dogma or a superstition. There are many beliefs in Islam but five of these, called the *Five Articles of Faith*, are the most important. These are:

- Belief in God
- Belief in the Angels
- Belief in the Prophets
- Belief in the Revealed Books
- Belief in the Day of Judgment

## 5 What are the five pillars of Islam?

Islam requires its followers not only to believe in certain things, but also to carry out certain duties. Worship of God, in some form or another, is common to all religions of the world. The purpose of worshipping God in Islam is to evoke His help and guidance in leading a purposeful life in this world, and to acquire His attributes. In a broader sense of the word, worship is obeying God. The various ritualistic worships described below are nothing more than means of training the soul and disciplining one's self. The five fundamental acts of worship in Islam are:

- Declaration of Faith, *Shahadah*
- Prayer, *Salat*
- Fasting, *Saum*
- Alms giving, *Zakat*
- Pilgrimage, *Hajj*

## 6 Approximately how many prophets are mentioned in the Qur'an by name and how many in the Bible?

The Quran mentions only twenty-five prophets by name while the Bible mentions about fifty. Most of the Quranic prophets can be identified with their Biblical counterparts: *Yaqub as* of the Quran is the Biblical Jacob, *Haroon as* in the Quran is Aaron in the Bible, *Shuaib as* of the Quran is the Biblical Jethro, and so on. The important distinction is that while Christians believe in only those prophets mentioned in the modern day Bible, Muslims believe in all prophets of God. The Quran clearly states, “And there is no people to whom a Warner has not been sent” (35:25); “And We, indeed, sent Messengers before thee; of them are some whom We have mentioned to thee; and of them are some whom We have not mentioned to thee” (40:79).

## 7 Who was the first prophet in history? Was he also the first man who existed?

The earliest of all known prophets was, of course, Adam<sup>as</sup>. Historians place the time of Adam<sup>as</sup> at around four thousand years before Christ (4,000 B.C.), and think that he lived in the fertile area between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers known as Mesopotamia. Contrary to popular belief, Adam<sup>as</sup> was not the first created man. People already existed before Adam<sup>as</sup>. Modern research in the science of evolution demonstrates this fact very clearly that human beings evolved, over a long period of time, from simpler and more primitive animal life. Adam<sup>as</sup> marks that specific stage in this evolutionary process at which God started to communicate with human beings.

## 8 Which prophet lived at the same time as Prophet Abraham but was not his son?

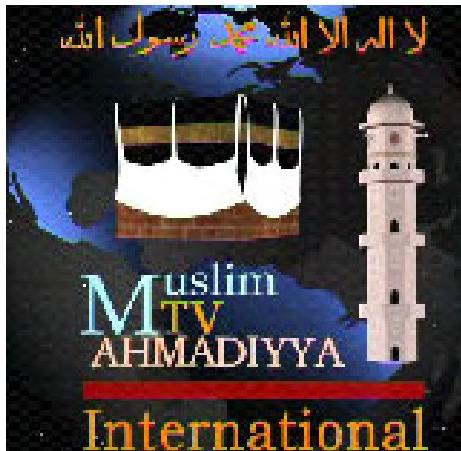
The prophet Lot<sup>as</sup> (*Loot* in the Quran) is also have been known to have lived in the period 2165 to 1990 B.C.

Adapted from A Book of Religious Knowledge, ed. Waheed Ahmad

We invite our readers to send in questions and we will try to accomodate you with answers in this column. -- Editor

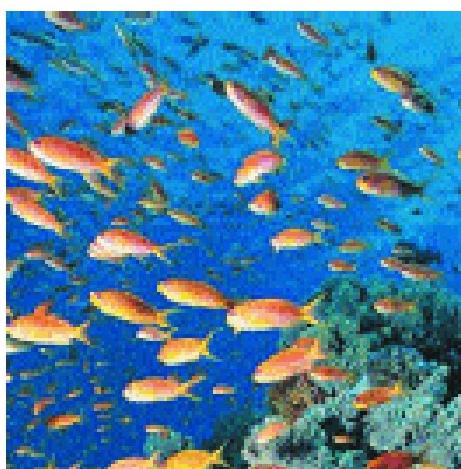


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# Perspectives: Red Light Shopping

**A**t one of the exits on Eisenhower express way near downtown Chicago, I stopped at the red light. There were a few cars in front of me waiting for the light to turn green. Alongside the exit ramp a man had set up a display of merchandise. All along the fence, he had pictures in frames, candies, stuffed animals and some other attention grabbing items. It was a big display, at least twenty-five feet long. I started to mumble. Who would buy these things? How did this man figure that he could sell this stuff? He probably designed his own marketing plan. I am sure he doesn't know about time management guessing at the time it takes him to set it up and repack at the end of the day. I rejected

to God that the light would change before he gets to their car. We do remember God at every desperate moment. Well, the light turned green, and I was happy that he had not gotten to my car yet. It was a close one. I have a strict policy not to open the windows of my car in that neighborhood. This is part of my Homeland Security plan.

By our behavior, everyday of our lives, we condone certain behavior in others. I could not count how many times in my life I have given money to the beggars on the streets of Lahore, Cairo, Paris and even in Chicago downtown. I have given money to the people at red lights with cans in their hands when I had no clue why they were wearing colorful aprons. But, I would

not give a dollar to the man on the exit ramp for a candy. Here is a man who is making an effort to make a living. Instead of begging, he is selling something. As for the usefulness of the items, I can show you my garage full of things that I bought from big shopping centers that I never used. My clothes closet is another example but that's because of my losing the race with changing fashions. I didn't have to buy a painting from him or a stuffed animal. I could have just given him a dollar for the effort. He was being honorable. At least he did not smear my windshield with his dirty squeegee after I had just paid eight dollars to wash my car.

Our religion has emphasized so much for giving charity that we feel good when we give to a beggar. The beggars know it, too. I don't know how many millions of beggars there are in Muslim countries but they are everywhere. Even when you visit the Great Pyramids in Egypt, walking around in the heat, you find beggars. There is nobody selling water bottles or soda – to the tourists but the beggars still beg from them. I wonder if I condone this behavior of the beggars.

Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> said that the upper hand is better than the lower hand. He also professed to his people not to beg but to work and make a living off their sweat. Muslims seem to forget that, especially the professional beggars. It was Prophet Muhammad<sup>sa</sup> who told one of his companions to sell the only clothes he had and buy an axe. Then he told him to cut the woods in the jungle and sell it in the market. The beggars' count went down by one. Not understanding this transforms masses into beggars. Even some Muslim Governments have become beggars of the modern world.



the thought that it was his front to sell drugs. This was much too hard a work for a drug-pushers. I continued mumbling. Where does he even buy this merchandise? Probably in a bulk purchase at a garage sale.

It was amazing how the man was trying to make a sale walking from one car to the next. He was bundled up because it was cold and that did not improve his demeanor as a salesman. I do not know how many hours he spent there and how many days a week. I could see other drivers in cars next to me squirming in their seats praying

We should look around ourselves and see which behavior we should condone. When we see a brother doing a good thing, we should give him a helping hand. If nothing else, give him a good advice or appreciate his goodness. When you see someone displaying indecent behavior, don't just pass by. Make a point of it, otherwise your being quiet will condone his behavior. Sometimes, what you don't do is more important than what you say or do.

**S**pending in the way of Allah is not just to give to the beggars. The Holy Quran tells us to spend our money on our family, travelers, needy and the orphans. It also tells us to spend on people for Taleef-I-Quloob (soothing or captivating the hearts) to empower them to do good. This is to help the people who do not beg but who are nonetheless needy. Spend on them to empower them to be respectable so they don't beg. Prophet Muhammad especially kept his eyes on families like that and made sure that they were helped. I think the man on the exit ramp qualified. I believe spending money on him would have been spending in the way of Allah. God knows I didn't need his merchandise, especially the candy.

The following verse of the Holy Quran is straightforward:

*"These alms are for the poor who are detained in the cause of Allah and are unable to move about in the land. The ignorant consider them to be free from want merely because they desist from begging. Thou shalt know them by their appearance; they do not beg of men with importunity. And whatever you spend of your wealth on such people of that Allah is fully-aware"* (2:274).

Sometimes, I wonder if the man on that ramp is still there. Maybe he changed his spot after having experience with prospective customers like me. Maybe he revised his marketing plans. I hope, actually I pray, that he did not conclude it was easier and more profitable to be a beggar. I hope I didn't help him make that decision.

I really did not have much use for the five dollars that I could have spent on shopping at the ramp for one of his paintings. I could have gotten blessings by shopping at that exit ramp. He provided me the opportunity, and I missed it. It was a real good deal for only five dollars. I rarely miss a bargain at the Mall.

I wish I had a better understanding of spending in the way of Allah back then.

-- Falahud Din Shams, Editor

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